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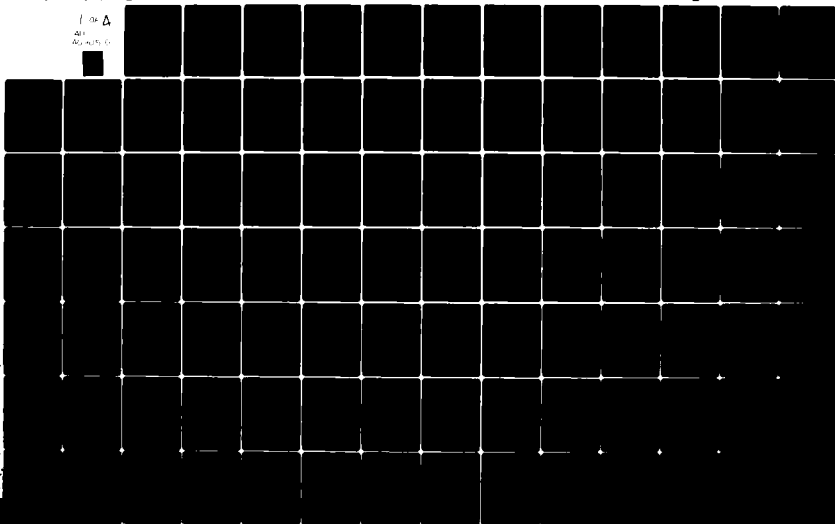
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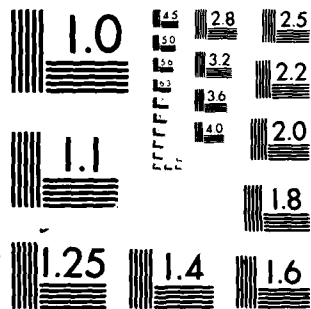
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THE MEDIA AND THE PRESIDENTIAL MARATHON

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The undersigned, appointed by the Dean of the Graduate Faculty, have examined a thesis entitled

THE MEDIA AND THE PRESIDENTIAL MARATHON
AN OVERVIEW OF PRESS-CANDIDATE RELATIONS IN THE MODERN PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN

presented by Peter S. Kindsvatter

a candidate for the degree of Master of Arts

and hereby certify that in their opinion it is worthy of acceptance.

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Research findings, critical comments, and personal experiences of political journalists, professional campaign consultants, and political scientists concerning the modern presidential campaign are reviewed. Specifically, the way in which the media and the presidential candidate and his staff interact is examined. Examples are drawn from the 1968, 1972, 1976 and 1980 campaigns. The nature of "the new politics" is examined. This includes an →		

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>examination of the public relations techniques employed by professional campaigners in an attempt to manipulate the media. Also, the increasingly important role of the media in the campaign process is examined. The media's role as Great Mentioner in the nomination process and the increasing emphasis on horserace coverage is reviewed.

The nature of the candidate's mediated message is discussed, including the candidate's emphasis on imagery and the candidate's need for manipulating issues. The effect of the candidate's message on the voter is examined, specifically in light of the agenda-setting and selective perception concepts.

Finally, the increasing length of the presidential campaign is examined. The campaign process has become a marathon for the candidate, the media, and the public.

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INTRODUCTION

The presidential election process has undergone significant changes in the past few decades resulting in a virtually new process which some critics term "the new politics." In this new system the channels of mass communications have become vital direct links between the presidential candidate and his potential constituency. The result has been the elevation of the media to a role of major import in the presidential election.

Perhaps greatest of all the media influences on the election is the role the media play in the nominating process, particularly during the pre-primary and early primary period. This role is the result of the recent democratization of the presidential nominating process brought about by changes in state primary laws, national party rules, and federal campaign laws. Because of these changes, the majority of delegates to the national conventions are now selected in direct primaries rather than party-controlled caucuses. The small contributor and the individual voter now play a far more significant role in the nominating process than they did two decades ago when the power was vested in professional politicians and large contributors. The increasing number of primaries, however, has led to a consequent lengthening of the nominating process. As a result of these changes, one

critic now refers to the nominating process as the "marathon," because it has become increasingly long, hard, and demanding for both the candidates and the media.

Because the media play a key role in the presidential marathon, there is growing interest in the effects the media may be having on the election process. This paper will examine some of the ramifications of these effects. For example, do the media influence the candidate and his campaign? How do the media influence the candidate's message? How do the candidate and his staff of public relations specialists affect the media? What is the impact of the candidate's mediated message on the voters? These questions are being asked by politicians, journalists, and political scientists with increasing regularity.

This paper will explore the answers to these questions. Much information is provided from the writings of experienced journalists, professional campaigners, and media critics who supply first-hand knowledge and personal examples. When possible, such personal but nonscientific comments are supported by the research findings of political and social scientists. A growing body of research concerning media effects in the campaign process is available, and some of the more significant studies are cited in this paper.

The main emphasis of this paper is on press-candidate relations in the presidential campaign, particularly the recent campaigns--1968, 1972, 1976, and the ongoing 1980 campaign. It is during these campaigns that the marathon has grown to its present length of approximately two years, if

not longer. (The candidates are actively campaigning for the nomination and election for well over a year, and planning and preparation are ongoing long before the active campaigning.)

During this long process the media and the candidate interact in a variety of ways. This interaction has become significant in the modern presidential election because increasingly the media, and not the party, play the key role of intermediary between candidate and voter. As noted, this is in part due to the democratization of the nominating process. Other factors are also important, however. Voters are not nearly as partisan as they used to be, and the mobility of modern society, not to mention the sheer increase in its size, has resulted in a weakening of the political party as the main influence on the voter. The media have taken over, in large measure, the role of the political party.

Another reason for the rise of the mass media campaign is the technological developments in the media. The advent of television has been particularly significant, but all the media are increasingly able to present more news more quickly. The media have also shown an increasing interest in the presidential campaign and its newsworthiness. Consequently, they have devoted a larger and larger share of their new technology and their increasingly large news hole toward coverage of the presidential campaign.

Hence, for a variety of reasons, the media have become a key factor in the campaign process. In direct response to this development, use of the professional

consultant in the campaign has increased dramatically. The campaign consultant is a public relations expert. The presidential candidate relies on a large professional staff of these experts. Their speciality is preparing the candidate's media strategy and then implementing that strategy through both the public and paid media.

The campaign consultant caters to the press, relying on the time-honored public relations principle that service and cooperation will yield the best coverage for the candidate. He relies on the media event for producing such favorable coverage, and he carefully paces the flow of campaign news to insure maximum coverage. He also insures that each media event is carefully planned and orchestrated to prevent mistakes. Finally, the wise consultant will carefully control the media's access to the candidate and the campaign staff to avoid the adverse news that can result from gaffes or staff complaints.

Thus the candidate's professional consultants can have considerable impact upon the media and the way the media report the campaign. But the media's role in this process is much more than as passive tools to be used and manipulated by the consultant. The media inject their own news values and interpretations into the reporting process. Frequently, therefore, the campaign message, as carried by the media, is not what the candidate originally had in mind. The candidate's message is a blend of personal imagery and positions on issues and policies. The interjection of news values often results in that image or issue not being

presented to the voter in the untarnished version preferred by the candidate. In the extreme case, the media's version of the message may be exactly opposite that desired by the candidate, the classic example being when the media emphasize a candidate's mistakes, or gaffes.

The media's effect on the candidate's message is therefore often significant. The media have other important effects on the process as well. The media's most powerful influence is evident during the marathon nominating process. As already noted, the nominating process has grown increasingly long, and the media are an integral part of it. In this process the media play the role of the Great Mentioner; that is, the elites of the political press--the top newspapers, television, news magazines, and wire services--decide which candidates are serious, or viable, and which are not. The viable candidate is assured sufficient favorable coverage. The candidate not blessed with the media's label of "serious," however, is virtually doomed to obscurity. Where once the political parties nominated the candidates, the voters now do the nominating based in large measure on perceptions gained from the mass media.

Another important effect of the media on the process is their influence on the voter. A widely accepted view is that the public thinks about and attaches importance to those issues emphasized by the media. Thus, the media set the public's agenda of issues. The campaign agenda set by the media is therefore important to the way the voter perceives the

campaign. This media agenda has been proven by various researchers to stress primarily the horserace aspect of the campaign: Who is ahead? Who will win? What are the campaign strategies? Who has the most colorful campaign events and the most dramatic rhetoric? The horserace receives more emphasis than the candidate's issue positions and qualifications, and this emphasis is reflected in the way voters perceive the campaign.

A final media effect results from the increasing use of polls. Polling is an important aspect of the new politics, and the candidates are making increasing use of such polls to determine what image to portray and what issues to support. The media have also increased their use of polls, partly in an effort to offset the candidate's polls which are not always as objective as they might be. Media polls may also have a negative effect in that they tend to aggravate the horserace nature of campaign coverage, and they may have an unfair effect on a candidate's ability to raise funds and recruit volunteers.

Hence, the media's effects on the presidential campaign are numerous and significant. Consequently the candidate relies on an increasingly large, specialized staff of public relations and media consultants to deal with these media effects. In the modern presidential campaign, particularly during the nomination process, the candidate's ability to get his messages through to the voters untarnished via the channels of the mass media will often determine his success at the polls.

Finally, many critics do not see the democratization of the nominating process and the resultant long, hard, marathon campaign as a healthy development. Some of the individuals best-qualified to be president may not be interested in pursuing such a grueling ordeal. Also, the media are devoting an increasing amount of time, money, and personnel to covering the marathon, thereby aggravating the process by giving it increasing attention. The resultant extra months of coverage during the pre-primary period may not be worth the trouble.

Thus the marathon, a phenomenon that has developed during the decade of the seventies as a result of recent electoral reforms, is being seen as an unsatisfactory way of electing a president, and some critics are clamoring for further reforms.

This study draws upon the expertise of political scientists, political reporters, and professional consultants to illustrate the points outlined above. The experts cited have contributed significantly to the large volume of information available concerning press-candidate relations. A description of the credentials of the most frequently cited of these experts is useful before examining their specific contributions.

The public relations experts and campaign professionals cited include some of the most prominent in their field. The father of modern public relations, Edward Bernays, is often quoted to provide background and perspective to the modern use of public relations in the campaign. His 1923

book, Crystallizing Public Opinion, is the first book dealing with the subject of modern public relations, and many of his concepts are solidly established in the modern profession of public relations.

A public relations director critical of the consultant's role in the modern presidential campaign is Melvyn Bloom. Bloom was a reporter and news editor for CBS News, an associate of the management consultant firm of Murden and Company, and director of public relations for the United Jewish Appeal.

Paul Theis is a public relations professional involved in political work. He was a reporter for Newsweek, a congressional assistant, and is currently the director of public relations for the Republican Congressional Committee.

An oft-cited campaign manager is Joseph Napolitan. He managed Milton Shapp's 1966 gubernatorial campaign in Pennsylvania and Hubert Humphrey's presidential campaign in 1968. He has written numerous books and articles on professional campaigning.

The author of several particularly detailed campaign handbooks on how to manipulate the media is Arnold Steinberg. Steinberg is a public relations professional who has managed numerous campaigns and was an aide to Senator James L. Buckley of New York. He is a frequent contributor to Newsweek, the Washington Post, and numerous West Coast publications.

Frank Mankiewicz is typical of many campaign consultants in that he alternates between public relations and

journalism positions. He was Senator Robert Kennedy's press secretary, was the media director for George McGovern's 1972 campaign, and is currently president of National Public Radio.

Herbert Baus and William Ross formed a professional campaign management firm in California in 1948. They managed the California campaign for Barry Goldwater's 1964 presidential bid and California campaigns for Richard Nixon, Edmund Brown, and Sam Yorty.

Joe McGinniss' contribution was his study of Nixon's television image campaign in 1968. McGinniss was an insider during the campaign and observed the planning and media manipulation inherent in the presidential campaign. McGinniss has also reported for the Philadelphia Bulletin and Philadelphia Inquirer.

Political advertiser Tony Schwartz has written a book on broadcast advertising. Schwartz' speciality is political advertising, and he has produced thousands of television and radio ads for numerous candidates including Lyndon Johnson and Jimmy Carter.

A large number of political reporters are cited, and generally they present a balancing perspective to the comments and concepts espoused by the campaign professionals. Perhaps the most-cited political reporter is Jules Witcover, a veteran of all the recent presidential campaigns and the author of several books, including Marathon, a comprehensive examination of the 1976 campaign. Witcover reported for the Los Angeles Times and the Washington Post for many years, and he now shares a syndicated column with fellow reporter

Jack Germond of the Washington Star.

An equally prominent, and active, political reporter is James Perry. He is a veteran of many campaigns and has written several books and many articles. Perry is the senior editor and political analyst for The National Observer.

Adding perspective to the reporter's viewpoint, as well as valuable insights into the nature of news and the workings of public opinion, is Walter Lippmann whose 1922 book Public Opinion remains a definitive work. Much of what is said of modern campaigning was first said many years ago by Lippmann. Lippmann was an editor for New Republic, editor for The New York World, and the author of seven books.

Another source of information this paper relies heavily on, particularly for up-to-date, incisive reports on the ongoing 1980 campaign, is the National Journal. This Washington-based magazine deals strictly with politics, and the correspondents are experienced political observers and writers. Those most often cited are Dom Bonafede, William Lanouette, Maxwell Glen, and Richard Cohen.

Two prominent press critics add balance to the media's viewpoint of their role in the electoral process. Ben Bagdikian is the assistant managing editor of the Columbia Journalism Review and is a journalism professor at the University of California at Berkeley. Edwin Diamond is the senior editor of the Washington Journalism Review and head of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's News Study Group.

Other journalists cited include Elizabeth Drew, a

correspondent for New Yorker magazine and Atlantic; Steven Brill, an investigative reporter and contributing writer to New York, Harper's, and Esquire magazines; Carl Leubsdorf, a long-standing political reporter who has worked for the Associated Press and the Baltimore Sun; Stephen Isaacs, correspondent for the Washington Post; James McCartney, a national correspondent for the Knight-Ridder newspaper group; and John Midgley, a British journalist who is the American editor for The Economist.

Broadcast journalism is represented by the viewpoints of Richard S. Salant, former president of CBS News; Elmer W. Lower, former president of ABC News; and Robert MacNeil, co-anchor of PBS's nightly "MacNeil/Lehrer Report."

Finally, the valuable contribution of Timothy Crouse must be mentioned. Crouse was commissioned by Rolling Stone to observe and report on the political reporters who were covering the 1972 campaign. His book, The Boys on the Bus, was particularly insightful of press-candidate relations on the campaign trail.

While the professional journalists and the professional campaigners usually offer different viewpoints on the relationship between the press and the presidential candidate, the work and research contributed by political scientists and other educators add a disinterested overview to the process.

One such group, the political and social researchers, add the extra factor of scientifically collected data to their observations. Their findings are therefore significant,

and this paper relies heavily on some of their research results. The first prominent researcher in the area of media effects on the campaign was Paul Lazarsfeld. Lazarsfeld and his colleagues conducted the first scientific study of a presidential campaign, the 1940 campaign. Lazarsfeld received his Ph.D. from the University of Vienna and was the director of applied social research at Columbia University at the time of his 1940 study.

Doris Graber's content analyses of the media during the 1968 and 1972 campaigns provided valuable insight into the nature of the candidate's message as transmitted and affected by the media. Graber is a professor of political science at the University of Illinois at Chicago.

Maxwell McCombs is the researcher primarily responsible for formulating the now widely accepted theory of agenda-setting. His study of voters in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the 1968 campaign provided the basis for this theory. McCombs and his colleague Donald Shaw were both professors at the University of North Carolina at the time of the study. McCombs is now professor of communications research at Syracuse University.

Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure's 1972 study of television and voter behavior in the 1972 presidential election provided important insight into the effects, or lack of effects, of television in the campaign process. Patterson's study of the 1976 campaign, results to be released in book form in the summer of 1980, may prove to be the most exhaustive and extensive study yet done on media effects. Patterson's

manuscript of this study is cited frequently in this thesis. Patterson is chairman of the political science faculty at Syracuse University. McClure is also a professor at Syracuse.

Michael Robinson has done extensive studies of the political impact of television. Much of his work supports the contention that television plays a significant role in the electoral process. Robinson is a professor of political science at Catholic University.

These are the political researchers most often cited in this study. Many other prominent political scientists and educators also provide valuable information, if not specific research studies. Dan Nimmo's information on image making and media manipulation is particularly valuable. Nimmo is a political science professor at the University of Tennessee and the author of several books on political image making.

Stanley Kelley's early work from the 1950s is extremely perceptive in predicting the trend toward new politics and the use of public relations in politics. Kelley is a political scientist at Princeton University and the author of several books on campaigning.

Clinton Rossiter is cited for his discussion of candidate availability criteria. Rossiter was a senior professor at Cornell University who specialized in American political institutions.

Daniel Boorstin is an historian whose work in the area of images in American society has provided valuable background for discussing political image making. Boorstin

was the senior historian at the Smithsonian Institution and is presently the Librarian of Congress.

James David Barber, F. Christopher Arterton, and Donald R. Matthews are cited for their discussion of the media's role in the nominating process. Their work appeared in a book entitled Race for the Presidency. Barber is a professor of political science at Duke University, Arterton is a professor of political science at Yale University, and Matthews is a professor of political science at the University of Washington.

The impact of communications theorist Marshall McLuhan and his ideas concerning television's influence on political image making cannot be overlooked in a study of this nature. McLuhan's book, Understanding Media, has had an important effect on the way candidates and consultants view the role of the media in the campaign, particularly television. McLuhan is an English professor at St. Michael's College in Toronto. He received his Ph.D. from Cambridge in England.

An early critic of the professionally managed campaign was Aldous Huxley who warned against the merchandizing of candidates in his 1958 book Brave New World Revisited. Huxley was a writer with many books, magazine articles, plays, and short stories to his credit. While not quite fitting into the category of political scientist, his predictions of future trends were often quite accurate.

An up-to-date view of the presidential race is provided by political scientist Richard A. Watson's latest book.

Watson received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan. He is also a lawyer and is currently a professor of political science at the University of Missouri at Columbia.

Also cited are Robert Lane, professor of political science at Yale University; Leon Sigal, professor of government at Wesleyan University; and Herbert Alexander, professor of political science at the University of Southern California and an expert on campaign financing.

These are some of the most often quoted political scientists, researchers, political journalists, and campaign professionals in this study. The attempt has been to portray all sides of the issue of candidate-press relations. When possible, balancing viewpoints are presented. In fact, it is most often the case that no single, clear-cut answer, solution, or result is presented because of the diversity of legitimate viewpoints available. The intent of this thesis is to identify and explain trends and to provide information about the overall relationship between press and candidates. This thesis attempts to show that while there are, indeed, shortcomings and problems in the present system, there are no easy or clear-cut solutions.

CHAPTER I

MEDIA, CANDIDATES, AND THE NEW POLITICS

The Nature of Press-Candidate Relations

It is difficult to understand the nature of press-candidate interactions without first understanding the underlying relationship that motivates these actions.

Because both the press and the candidate attempt through various methods at their disposal to manipulate the relationship to satisfy their own aims, the relationship is often described as adversarial. Political scientist F. Christopher Arterton explains this view:

One model by which the interaction of journalists and campaigners can be understood is that of adversarial relations as is captured by such titles as Us and Them: How the Press Covered the 1972 Election and The Adversaries: Politics and the Press. Campaign operatives seek to reach voters by manipulating the behavior of reporters and correspondents, while journalists are attempting to pry out of the campaign information about the strategy, organization, issue positions, and character of the candidate which the latter would prefer to keep from public view.¹

The participants in the relationship often take a similar view. Longtime political reporter Jules Witcover describes the inevitability of such an adversarial relationship in the campaign:

Some few in the press seem to think that candidates should suffer fools gladly if the fools have press cards--just as some officeseekers think the press should do likewise, as long as the candidate possesses

a public forum. The result is a highly charged adversary relationship--oftentimes tempered by personal cordiality, good will, and good sense on both sides, but always there. Since a political candidate is in the business of putting his best foot forward to get elected, and the press is in the business of holding that foot to the fire, the adversary relationship is inevitable.²

Not only does the press consider the relationship an adversarial one, but so also do the candidates. This was exemplified in a Jules Witcover interview of Jimmy Carter in January of the 1976 presidential campaign. Carter, already chafing from the close scrutiny and questioning by the press, said:

To have this concentrated attention on myself and the other candidates by the press at this early stage is really extraordinary. . . . I think that [it] possibly will make the press more demanding than they should be on final answers on complicated questions at the early stage of a campaign, when the accumulation of advisers and the detailed analysis of major programs are unavailable to the average candidate who doesn't yet have the stature and the time of the nominee himself. I'll just have to be frank in saying I don't know the answer to a question when the question is too demanding.³

While it is undoubtedly the case that press-candidate relations are in large measure adversarial, such a concept is inadequate to explain the overall relationship. As Arterton notes, the relationship is more accurately described as a symbiotic one:

Conflict between campaigners and journalists is quite real, but does not encompass the entirety of their interactions. While campaign-media relations are adversarial in part, they are also cooperative.

A symbiosis of the goals of journalists and those who manage presidential campaigns provides a good deal of mutually beneficial interaction. On the one hand, news reporting organizations certainly define the presidential race as an important story which must be covered . . . and [they] devote

a substantial portion of their "news hole" to presenting campaign events and commentary. Presidential candidate organizations, on the other hand, seek to use the reporting process as a relatively inexpensive means of communicating with voters and political activists. Campaigns, therefore, are altogether happy to facilitate journalists in the conduct of their work.⁴

As will be discussed in detail in later chapters, there is a good deal of manipulation, adversity and perceived negative influence between the press and the candidate, but the overall relationship is primarily one of cooperation for mutual benefits. Significantly, the key word for campaign media strategists is not "manipulation," but "service." Campaign consultants Herbert M. Baus and William B. Ross discuss a "working partnership":

Today there is a working partnership between the professionals who obtain, marshal, and present the news in the press, and the professionals who help the campaigning candidate and the elected official tell the story.

The successful modern politician is the one who has the prescience and the professionals to develop his story and work with the press to get his story before the people.⁵

In such a mutually beneficial relationship, one is hard pressed to determine who derives the most benefit--the press or the candidate. Many involved in the process feel it is a tossup, as evidenced by these remarks at a round-table discussion conducted by the Washington Journalism Review in November 1980:

WJR: "Does that suggest the politician is using the press more than the press is using the politician?"

Kamarck (Elaine K., of the Democratic National Committee): "I think press and politicians are in a very reciprocal relationship."

Keene (David K., George Bush's campaign manager):

"It's symbiotic."

Schorr (Daniel S., syndicated columnist): "It's a relationship of mutual satisfactory manipulation."⁶

Other observers and participants in the process, however, are not so sure that the relationship is equally symbiotic to both parties. Some fear the candidate, by virtue of his ability to control the campaign process, holds the upper hand. Arterton is one such believer:

While there exists a great deal of shared experience as to what a campaign can do . . . to maximize its news objectives, there are no formal rules as to what a campaign must do. Thus, one campaign may organize "citizen press conferences" four or five times a day in which reporters are prohibited from asking questions, while another may schedule a daily press briefing. Reporters may complain about certain campaign practices or changes in their access to information. They have, however, little leverage to exercise on how the campaign conducts its news strategy. Ultimately, the campaigners hold the initiative because they control the actions and words of the candidates.⁷

Certainly a candidate, who controls his own media strategy and schedule, can go a long way toward gaining the upper hand in the relationship. The great extent to which the candidate and his staff will go to accomplish this is examined in some detail in Chapter II. But Arterton's argument that the candidate has the advantage in the symbiotic relationship does not take into account the important fact that the presidential campaign goes through a series of phases. The degree to which the candidate has the advantage in the relationship depends a great deal upon the situation, as British journalist John Midgley notes:

What the power [of the press] generally consists of is not easy to generalize about. It does seem plain that the power of commentators rises and falls at

different points of the campaign year, and that, as between one political party and the other, it varies with the situation of each at any given moment. When a party has an established leader who is also accepted and electable, he can afford to treat the media as mere vehicles for his public relations.⁸

In essence, while the overall relationship is symbiotic, there is also a strong degree of conflict, or adversity, in press-candidate relations, and who has the upper hand depends a great deal upon the stage of the campaign and the situation surrounding the specific candidate. As examples in later chapters will show, the relationship can vary in degree from an unknown candidate courting the press to gain recognition to an "imperial" presidential incumbent who has little need of the public media in his bid for reelection.

While the degree to which the relationship favors one side or the other may vary, it is nevertheless safe to consider it a symbiotic one overall. Before examining the specific ways in which the press and the candidate influence or benefit each other, however, it is necessary to consider how this relationship came to be. Not so long ago, the press did not have such a significant role in the presidential campaign process. As correspondent Timothy Crouse notes, the political party, not the media, played the key role:

As recently as 1960, or even 1964, a coalition of party heavies, state conventions, and big-city bosses had chosen the candidate in relatively unviolated privacy and then presented him to the press to report on.⁹

Twenty years ago no symbiotic press-candidate

relationship existed because the press was not "needed" by the candidate to the degree it is today. Consequently, it is important to examine how the mass media has risen to this position of prominence.

A second recent development in the press-candidate relationship must also be discussed before moving on to the specifics of the relationship: the rise of the campaign consultant. In direct response to the increasing role of the media in society in general, and the campaign in particular, the reliance on public relations techniques has grown significantly. The modern campaign staff has a considerable contingent of media specialists whose job is to gain maximum favorable publicity for their candidate via both the public and paid media.

Finally, this chapter will deal with current press-candidate relations resulting from these two developments, a result perhaps best described by some reporters and critics as the "new politics."

The Rise of the Mass Media Campaign

The importance of the mass media in the presidential campaign process is, of course, merely an outgrowth of the increasing importance of the media to society in general. Historian Daniel Boorstin appropriately refers to this as the "graphic revolution":

These events [the development of printing and the telegraph] were part of a great, but little-noticed, revolution--what I would call the Graphic Revolution. Man's ability to make, preserve, transmit, and disseminate precise images--images

of print, of men and landscapes and events, of the voices of men and mobs--now grew at a fantastic pace.¹⁰

With technological advances, new media were introduced, and the ability to rapidly transmit a large volume of news created a constant need for news:

Then came round-the-clock media. The news gap soon became so narrow that in order to have additional "news" for each edition or each new broadcast it was necessary to plan in advance the stages by which any available news would be unveiled. After the weekly and the daily came the "extras" and the numerous regular editions No rest for the newsman. With more space to fill, he had to fill it ever more quickly. In order to justify the numerous editions, it was increasingly necessary that the news constantly change or at least seem to change How to avoid deadly repetition, the appearance that nothing was happening, that news gatherers were asleep, or that competitors were more alert?¹¹

Indeed, as discussed in the next section, a new breed of press agents, far more sophisticated than their predecessors, were all too happy to help the harried journalist gather the news.

But the journalist, though his job was immensely complicated by the task of feeding the hungry "round-the-clock" media, found himself with a new-found power. As Boorstin notes, nowhere was this new power more evident than in the realm of the political journalist:

. . . the news-making profession in America had attained a new dignity as well as a menacing power. It was in 1828 that Macaulay called the gallery where reporters sat in Parliament a "fourth estate of the realm." But Macaulay could not have imagined the prestige of journalists in the twentieth-century United States. They have long since made themselves the tribunes of the people. Their supposed detachment and lack of partisanship, their closeness to the sources of information,

their articulateness, and their constant and direct access to the whole citizenry have made them also the counselors of the people. Foreign observers are now astonished by the almost constitutional--perhaps we should say supra-constitutional--powers of our Washington press corps.¹²

The journalist has become the intermediary between the people and the government, primarily because of the vast technological improvements in mass communications. This role as intermediary is a source of considerable power to the political reporter, as noted by one of the more prominent reporters, James Perry of the National Observer:

We are filters. It is through our smudgy, hand-held prisms that the voters meet the candidates and grow to love them or hate them, trust them or distrust them. We are the voters' eyes and ears, and we are more than that, for, sometimes, we perform a larger and, some would say, a more controversial function. We write the rules and we call the game.¹³

While the extent to which the modern political reporter now "writes the rules" is a point certainly open for debate, there is no doubt of the increased significance of the mass media in the campaign process. Not so long ago, however, the rules were written by the political parties. To a large extent this has changed because of modern media and transportation technology. As Arterton notes, the rise of the mass media in the political process parallels the decline in the political parties:

In the days when Americans were less geographically mobile and the reach of the corporate communications media less extensive, political parties served as preexisting, vertical, interpersonal links which could be mobilized on behalf of candidates during election campaigns. The difficulties of reaching voters during the campaign were eased by the maintenance of enduring political organizations.

In modern election campaigning, the functions served by the parties as ongoing networks of personal contacts can be achieved through use of different communications technologies: telephones, polling, direct mail, as well as the mass media. While these media require a good deal of expertise, they make superfluous the permanent organizations of party structures.¹⁴

Taking an even broader view of the impact of communications technology, communications theorist Marshall McLuhan says the representative form of government is obsolete, and that direct voter involvement in the process has resulted:

As the speed of information increases, the tendency is for politics to move away from representation and delegation of constituents toward immediate involvement of the entire community in the central acts of decision. Slower speeds of information make delegation and representation mandatory When the electric speed is introduced into such a delegated and representational organization, this obsolescent organization can only be made to function by a series of subterfuges and makeshifts.¹⁵

If there is one form of "electric-speed" that has done more than any other to reduce the role of the political party in the campaign process, it would have to be television. As political scientist Michael J. Robinson notes, while the parties have made significant use of television, particularly at the nominating conventions, this use has served not to strengthen the parties, but to weaken them.¹⁶ The real benefactor of television has been the candidate, who can now bypass the political parties and reach the voters directly:

As television became more important as a campaign tool for the national parties, it became an even more important vehicle for candidates, who used it as their principal mechanism for winning both primary and general elections--thus bypassing the parties. In that way, television denied the parties

their most important function--the right to recruit and campaign for office-seekers. At the same time, television was also taking from the parties their role as a major source of information about local or national campaigns and politics, a role they had held since the Jackson era.¹⁷

The decline in political party machinery has been ongoing for several decades. Political scientist Stanley Kelley, citing a 1952 University of Michigan survey, made note of this decline in his 1956 book Professional Public Relations and Political Power:

The University of Michigan Survey Research Center has reported that the votes of only 12 percent of its panel of interviewees were solicited by party workers in the course of the 1952 presidential campaign. And this does not necessarily mean solicitation in the machine pattern. The evidence would seem to indicate strongly that machine politics has declined in its importance and efficacy as a method of controlling government and stabilizing power relations, through this must be said without implying that the machine does not continue as an important influence in American politics.¹⁸

The decline in the importance of the party, though due in large measure to the technological advances in the media, is influenced by several other factors as well. One factor, as noted by Kelley, is the increasing mobility of the population, resulting in a breakdown in the person-to-person party machine:

The machine was built on person-to-person relationships and so depended on a certain stability of population, but high mobility is one of the more outstanding characteristics of the contemporary population. The power of the boss depended in part on his monopoly, for political purposes, of ties with the electorate. He had a kind of independence, because, at any given moment, the relationships he had built with his bloc of votes could not be duplicated. The mass media of communication offer a channel through which leaders can appeal directly to the voter and over the head of the boss. His monopoly of power is broken.¹⁹

Another, more recent, factor that has contributed to the rise of the mass media campaign and a decline in the importance of the political party's role is the 1974 amendment to the Campaign Finance Law of 1971. The amendment, passed as a result of excesses committed by Richard Nixon's Committee to Reelect the President, limits the amount of presidential campaign contributions to \$1,000 for individual and \$5,000 for political action committee contributions. The law also provides for partial public funding of primary campaigns and full public funding of the general election campaign.²⁰

The result of this amendment in the 1976 and 1980 campaigns was to eliminate big contributions and to reduce the overall amount that could be spent by the candidates. In 1972 Richard Nixon spent \$61.4 million on his reelection effort.²¹ In 1976, however, candidates were restricted to approximately \$13.1 million in the primary period and \$22 million in the general election period.²² In the 1980 campaign these limits will be 35 percent higher, based on increases in the consumer price index.²³

This limiting of funds had several effects on the campaign process. The tendency in 1976 was to emphasize media expenditures at the cost of traditional grassroots politicking. Jules Witcover describes this effect:

. . . Carter and Ford were the first to run under a new campaign finance law that channeled the presidential campaign into the television studio and America's living rooms as never before, and off the streets of the nation Determined to reach the maximum possible voter-contact with this

spending ceiling [\$21.8 million in the general election period], each camp in 1976 budgeted about half the federal subsidy for media, and nearly all of that for paid television. As a result, costly grass-roots politics--organizing in the field, distributing campaign literature, buttons, bumper stickers, manning telephone "boiler rooms," hiring political workers (fortified in large cities with "street money" to encourage voting)--was severely cut back. State, county, and big-city campaign headquarters that in past years had been beehives of activity, sending ripples of enthusiasm, commitment, and volunteer involvement out into the community, were crippled for lack of funds.²⁴

Hence, the new campaign finance laws, while having the admirable effect of reducing spending and corruption, may also be forcing candidates to turn increasingly to media advertising to obtain the best possible voter contact per dollar. This means less money, particularly in the general election, for the traditional neighborhood campaigning done by the local parties on behalf of their candidates. Some campaigners had to go so far as to actively discourage traditional party activity on the part of political activists. Robert J. Keefe, 1976 campaign director for Senator Henry Jackson, was one of several campaigners to complain of this problem at a post-election conference at the Institute of Politics of the Kennedy School of Government in Cambridge, Massachusetts:

It wasn't just that you couldn't afford bumperstickers or that sort of thing, it was that campaign managers found themselves actively discouraging people from doing things which would have been considered contributions in kind or which would have put the campaign over its limit. There was actual discouragement of activity by people who really wanted to do it, and they didn't understand it.²⁵

One final effect of the new campaign finance laws

may be that they encourage attempts by campaigners to manipulate the public media to obtain free coverage. Arterton explains this effect:

. . . limitations upon the amount of money campaigns could spend both in each state primary and over the entire nomination race placed a premium upon ways to pass the costs of communicating with the voters on to the corporately owned media. The fact that campaigns were limited in what they could spend and were also experiencing difficulty raising money led them to turn to the print and electronic media as a means of reaching voters, supporters and uncommitted delegates.²⁶

In short, the new campaign finance law has been a factor in the rise of the mass media campaign and the decline of traditional party activities. This factor, coupled with the increased mobility of the population and the development of an advanced, highspeed communications system, has resulted in the mass media presidential campaign--a campaign in which parties have taken a secondary role. Today, as political scientist Thomas E. Patterson notes, the media are the key intermediary in the campaign process:

Today's presidential campaign is essentially a mass media campaign. It is not that the mass media entirely determine what happens in the campaign, for that is far from true. But it is no exaggeration to say that, for the large majority of voters, the campaign has little reality apart from its media version. Without the benefit of direct campaign contact, citizens must rely on the media for nearly all of their election information. Moreover, the media are now without question the basis for the candidates' organizations. Presidential aspirants primarily direct their activities toward getting their messages through the media as often as possible.²⁷

And so it has come to pass that the mass media now interact with the candidate in a symbiotic relationship. Only through the media can the candidate reach his constituency.

Conversely, the voters' knowledge of a candidate and his policies is derived almost solely from the mass media. Hence, the effect of the mass media on the voter is a crucial question in today's mass media campaign, and this will be examined in Chapter V. For now it is sufficient to be aware of the variety of roles the media can play. Political scientist Richard A. Watson cites reporter David Broder's list of roles:

. . . David Broder . . . suggests that newspeople are now the principal source of information on what presidential candidates are saying and doing. In the process they undertake a variety of roles, including (1) acting as "talent scouts" to discover able presidential candidates; (2) summarizing the candidates' positions; (3) performing as race callers or handicappers by assessing the chances of victory of the various contenders; (4) acting as the "public defender," in order to expose candidates who try to "dupe the voter," and (5) becoming volunteer, unpaid assistant managers for candidates. Thus journalists perform a variety of political roles in the campaign, many of which used to be the province of party and public officials.²⁸

The media's ability to perform these roles adequately is a subject of much discussion by critics and researchers and will be examined in some detail in later chapters.

If it were necessary to pick one factor that has been the primary cause of the rise of the mass media campaign, it would have to be the advances in communications technology, already described in general terms by Boorstin in his discussion of "round-the-clock media." And within the area of communications technology, no recent development has had more of an impact on campaigning than the development of television. Television's impact on the political party has already

been mentioned. The overall effect of television on the process, however, goes far beyond that. Some theorists, such as Marshall McLuhan, feel that television has completely dominated, and changed, the nature of campaigning:

With TV came the end of bloc voting in politics, a form of specialism and fragmentation that won't work since TV. Instead of the voting bloc, we have the icon, the inclusive political posture or stance. Instead of the product, the process. In periods of new and rapid growth there is a blurring of outlines. In the TV image we have the supremacy of the blurred outline, itself the maximal incentive to growth and new "closure" or competition, especially for a consumer culture long related to the sharp visual values that had become separated from the other senses.²⁹

McLuhan sees television as producing a new style of campaigning--the "supremacy of the blurred outline." The ability of a candidate to sell himself via a television image has become a cause of concern for critics. Image-campaigning (to the detriment of "sharp visual values" as noted above) will be discussed in Chapter IV.

The importance of television in the campaign process, a phenomenon that certainly developed in a very short time, nevertheless did not happen overnight, although one might think so from reading some accounts of the process. Political scientist Michael J. Robinson has devoted considerable time to studying the historical development of television in the political process, and a brief look at his findings reveals how television gained its present significance in the mass media campaign.

During the growing years of television, the decade of the 1950's, television did not play a significant political role:

In its first 10 years, television was an organization working toward two goals--saturation and acceptance. It was a new medium, and considerably less diverse in its composition and motives than older, more established media, like radio and the movies. Television was scared of radio, scared of the movies, and even scared of its own sponsors.

Television, so new and so expensive, could be--and was--intimidated. There were few within the industry who seriously regarded television as a political instrument, and even fewer who felt that the industry had any right, let alone a responsibility, to do anything "meaningful."³⁰

This lack of concern for political programming, however, came to an end in the course of a few years' time because of several key occurrences. The first was the television quiz show scandal in 1956, in which it was discovered that a network (NBC) had given selected contestants the answers to the questions.³¹ Television's credibility took a sharp dive in the polls, and the networks began casting about for ways to improve their image:

Within a year [of the scandal] the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) had established the Television Information Office (TIO), the public-relations arm for the industry.

In part, TIO did its original surveys hoping to show that the public, despite the scandals, still loved television. But in fact, despite loaded questions on the topic of quiz-show scandals, the Roper survey indicated that television had been hurt badly. More importantly, according to the Roper data, in 1959 clear pluralities believed that newspapers were more important and more credible than television as a source of information. It became essential to the industry that those pluralities be reversed. To accomplish that, the networks embarked on a campaign to increase the size and quality of their news and public-affairs divisions. . . . This policy eventually helped bring to television news the new, high-powered talent that had grown up regarding television as a legitimate and desirable place to build a career. . . .³²

If it were the quiz show scandals that propelled television into public-affairs broadcasting, it was John F. Kennedy

who brought television to political campaigning and to the White House:

The early 1960's also witnessed another new political function for television. Kennedy, so pleased with the medium that everyone agreed had helped elect him [particularly after the 1960 Nixon-Kennedy debates], quickly tried to convert the networks into a large Presidential megaphone. Eisenhower had never liked television and had done badly with it, but Kennedy reveled in it, more than tripling his predecessor's rate of monthly network appearances³³

Finally, as the interest in political coverage increased, the networks switched to thirty minute news presentations (from fifteen minutes) in 1963. This final factor assured television's role in the presidential campaign process, as described by Patterson:

Newly committed to gathering their own news material, the networks lengthened their evening newscasts in 1963 to the present 30 minutes. Transmitting their news through a visual medium to national audience, they focused primarily on national politics and personalities, thus becoming, as Michael Robinson has noted, almost ideally suited to the publicity need of presidential aspirants. Since 1964, in fact, the networks' evening news programs have been the major target of the candidates' campaign activities.³⁴

If not by 1964, then certainly by 1968, the importance of television (and the fear of its possible persuasive power) in the campaign process was widely recognized. Joe McGinniss' book, The Selling of the President 1968, brought television's role in the campaign to the country's attention. Public relations director Melvyn Bloom takes note of television's impact in 1968:

. . . it seems clear that the influence of television in the Nixon campaign of 1968 was all-pervasive. Not only was it an important factor in campaigning for the candidate, and an important

factor in covering the campaign for the media, it had also by now become the silent midwife of a continuous chain of pseudo-events, unrelated to the presidency or to one's qualification for office. Television was no longer even just a medium for reaching the electorate. Now a presidential candidate was performing for the medium. McLuhanism had blossomed much more effusively in this presidential campaign than in any of its previous quadrennial flowerings.³⁵

Bloom, while noting television's pervasiveness, also fears the medium's ability to distort and influence. This was a fear often voiced by critics in the latter 1960s and early 1970s--one which is still often heard. Some important recent studies in agenda-setting, however, indicate that television may not be the all-pervasive, influential medium many believe it to be (These studies are examined in Chapter V).

While television is undoubtedly a prime factor in the development of the mass media campaign, it is important not to forget the print media who continue to play a significant role. Patterson notes of newspapers:

Increasingly, newspapers have assigned reporters to the campaign trail, thus assuring the candidates of heavier coverage in locations distant from where they are campaigning. Moreover, the proportion of newspapers owned by corporate chains has grown from 30 percent in 1960 to over 60 percent, many of them heavily dependent on election news gathered by parent organizations. Thus it is increasingly possible for a candidate to receive widespread newspaper coverage through contact with a few well-placed reporters.³⁶

In summary, the technological developments in the media, most notably the development of television as a political instrument, coupled with the decline of the role played by political parties, in part directly because of the developing media, have give rise to the mass media campaign.

Indeed, in today's campaign, the media "star" may attract more attention than the candidate:

But it was [Walter] Cronkite's appearance in Pennsylvania that really made the [1980] primary seem special to the residents. He had joined the press following Kennedy on Sunday, and when he left the Kennedy plane, they greeted him with excited cries of "it's Walter; it's Walter."³⁷

The Rise of the Campaign Consultant

In direct response to the increasing importance of the mass media in society, the profession of public relations developed. With the advent of Boorstin's "round-the-clock" media came experts who were willing to help journalists gather the increasingly large volume of required news.

Furthermore, as the media became increasingly important in the campaign communications process, some of these public relations and advertising experts turned their talents to the specific task of assisting the candidate in his communications efforts--efforts requiring an increasing amount of money and expertise to be successful.

Before examining the development of the profession of campaign consulting, it is first necessary to examine the development of the broader field of public relations, for campaign consulting is an outgrowth of public relations. One of the first to make note of the increasing use of the "press agent" was Walter Lippmann. His 1922 description of how the press agent, later to be known as the public relations counsel, functions is perhaps as accurate as any modern definition:

The enormous discretion as to what facts and what impressions shall be reported is steadily convincing every organized group of people that whether

it wishes to secure publicity or avoid it, the exercise of discretion cannot be left to the reporter. It is safer to have a press agent who stands between the group and the newspapers.

Were reporting the simple recovery of obvious facts, the press agent would be little more than a clerk. But since, in respect to most of the big topics of news, the facts are not simple, and not all obvious, but subject to choice and opinion, it is natural that everyone should wish to make his own choice of facts for the newspapers to print. The publicity man does that. And in doing it, he certainly saves the reporter much trouble. . . . 38

In the above description, Lippmann makes several important points about how the public relations man functions, and these points are still the key to public relations success today, particularly in the attempts by the campaign consultants to manipulate or influence campaign coverage. The first point is that the public relations counsel "stands between" the press and the group (or candidate). This denotes controlled access to the source of information, a key to successful public relations.

The second point Lippmann makes above is that the public relations counsel "chooses the facts" for the reporter, thereby saving him "much trouble." This idea of assistance to the reporter, with the necessary corollary of familiarity with news style and news values, is embodied in the campaign consultant's theme of "service to the media." Both of these public relations functions will be examined in more detail in the next chapter.

Lippmann goes on to explain the ability of leaders, with the assistance of a growing number of experts, to manufacture consent, and he warns of the danger of manipulation:

That the manufacture of consent is capable

of great refinements no one, I think, denies . . . and the opportunities for manipulation open to anyone who understands the process are plain enough.

The creation of consent is not a new art. It is a very old one which was supposed to have died out with the appearance of democracy. But it has not died out. It has, in fact, improved enormously in technic, because it is now based on analysis rather than on rule of thumb. And so, as a result of psychological research, coupled with modern means of communication, the practice of democracy has turned a corner. A revolution is taking place, infinitely more significant than any shifting of economic power.

Within the life of the generation now in control of affairs, persuasion has become a self-conscious art and a regular organ of popular government.³⁹

Lippmann, who was writing in the post-World War I period when the persuasive effects of propaganda were habitually overstated, may have gone too far in saying a "revolution" was underway. However, he makes several important observations in the above statement. The first is that the "manufacturing of consent" is becoming increasingly "technic." Modern public relations techniques certainly bear this out. Secondly, he states that persuasion has become a "self-conscious art and regular organ of government" which is certainly the case today, and no where is the "art" more in evidence than on the campaign trail.

A year after Lippmann made the above observation in Public Opinion, Edward Bernays wrote the first book on public relations counseling in 1923. Bernays, like Lippmann, notes the growth in the public relations profession. Bernays also sees the role of counselor as an intermediary:

The public relations counselor is the pleader to the public of a point of view. He acts in this capacity as a consultant both in interpreting the public to his client and in helping to interpret his client to the public. He helps to mould the action of his client as well as to mould public opinion.⁴⁰

And to accomplish this role of intermediary, the counselor must use all available channels of communications:

So long as the press remains the greatest single medium for reaching the public mind, the work of the public relations counsel will necessarily have close contacts with the work of the journalist. He transmits his ideas, however, through all those mediums which help to build public opinion--the radio, the lecture platform, advertising, the stage, the motion picture, the mails.⁴¹

While Bernays' description of the function of the public relations counsel sounds very similar to Lippmann's, there is a significant difference. Bernays says above that the counselor "helps to mould the action of his client," while Lippmann restricts his definition of a press agent to someone who communicates for his client, albeit persuasively. Bernays considers the public relations counsel to be not only an intermediary between the client and the media, but also an "adviser on actions."⁴² The extent to which the campaign consultant has taken this role to heart is discussed later in this section.

Bernays notes two reasons for the rise of the public relations counsel, and these reasons are still a factor today in the importance of public relations to the candidate. Bernays' first reason is the increased importance of public opinion:

The rise of the modern public relations counsel is based on the need for and value of his services. Perhaps the most significant social, political and industrial fact about the present century is the increased attention which is paid to public opinion, not only by individuals, groups or movements that are dependent on public support for their success, but also by men and organizations which until very recently stood aloof from the general public and were able to say, "The public be damned."⁴³

Bernays is referring here to the industrialists who by 1923 could no longer afford to ignore the growing protests against their malpractices. Consequently, public relations developed largely as an adjunct to business. But in later years, with the decline of the political party and the rise of the mass media campaign, the machine politicians found themselves in a similar position. The need to appeal directly to the voter (no more "public be damned") increasingly brought business public relations techniques into politics.

A second reason cited by Bernays for the rise of public relations is the need to communicate with an increasingly large, heterogeneous public:

Populations have increased. In this country geographical areas have increased. Heterogeneity has also increased. A group living in any given area is now extremely likely to have no common ancestry, no common tradition, as such, and no cohesive intelligence. All these elements make it necessary to-day [sic] for the proponent of a point of view to engage an expert to represent him before society, an expert who must know how to reach groups totally dissimilar as to ideals, customs and even language. It is this necessity which has resulted in the development of the counsel on public relations.⁴⁴

As discussed earlier, this increasingly large, heterogeneous population was a key factor in the decline of the traditional party system and the consequent rise in importance of the media in the campaign. As this process began to take hold, the public relations counsel gained increased prominence in politics.

For the two reasons cited above, along with the increasing role in society played by the mass media, the public relations counsel was soon entrenched in the business

world as an adviser and persuasive communicator. It was not long thereafter that politicians, always looking for a way of improving their chances at the polls, began thinking about public relations techniques as more efficient than old-fashioned party propaganda as a means of gaining political support:

. . . industrial public relations and commercial advertising came to furnish standards by which to judge the efficiency of party propaganda efforts. Robert C. Brooks, writing in 1922, argued that:

Considering the large sums constantly spent for political propaganda, it is rather remarkable that we have no better guides in this field than certain traditional rules of thumb and the idiosyncracies of the campaign manager in temporary command. By the employment of research methods similar to those applied in analyzing business concerns, efficiency experts should be able to throw light on the relative value of advertising, distributing documents, speakers' bureaus, and each of the other practical methods of campaigning.⁴⁵

Although politicians were slow at first to take advantage of the public relations techniques used by business, by 1956, as media technology continued to improve and as the political parties declined in importance, the politician and public relations counsel were firmly united. Stanley Kelley observes in 1956:

. . . it should be apparent that political prominence for the public relations man is not only here but that it is not a transient phenomenon. Rather, it is based on a solid demand for the public relations man's services, a demand which is in turn derivative from social developments of far-reaching consequences. More than to anything else, public relations as an occupation owes its existence to the growth of the mass media of communication. Having committed themselves to the use of the mass media for propaganda

purposes, politicians and interest groups have found it an exceedingly complex problem to use them in such a way as to receive wide circulation for a point of view.⁴⁶

Political scientist Dan Nimmo, writing in 1970, similarly describes the reasons for the use of public relations in politics, and in his words are found a reflection of Edward Bernays' original 1923 reasons for the growth of public relations:

Population mobility eroded local ties Social welfare programs weakened party appeals to the indigent, civil service deprived party politicians of patronage positions in the public service, and the movement of people to the suburbs drained party machines in the central cities of prospective supporters Finally, the sheer growth in the size of the potential electorate made it increasingly difficult for candidates to reach all voters by personal contact. The techniques of mass persuasion made it possible for candidates to adjust to these changes: using mass appeals they could attract party supporters wherever they might be and advertise their name and credentials to new constituents without having to depend on weakened party organizations. To take full advantage of mass persuasion, candidates needed the advice of a skilled group specializing in the new techniques of communication and professional campaigners offered their talents.⁴⁷

To the reasons cited above, Kelley adds that the increasing cost of campaigning incurred by the use of the mass media is another key factor in the growth of political public relations:

Rising campaign costs have been a factor which, in very practical terms, has impressed the politician with the need for public relations advice. The use of new and expensive media such as television, together with growing printing costs, are primarily responsible for the increased price of politics. With the problem one of getting maximum impact for the message within the limits of the campaign budget, the tendency

is to accept the judgment of the specialist.⁴⁸

As a final reason for the increasing use of public relations in the campaign, Kelley notes that politicians will try anything if they think it will help them win:

Finally, there is some magic involved in the demand for public relations services. There are few data for evaluating, with anything like scientific accuracy, particular propaganda techniques, and certainly not for assessment of the effectiveness of "public relations" in general. Yet the habitual tendency of the politician is to "run scared," and he must necessarily look with favor on anyone who seems to have knowledge that will help him win. A competitive political situation and frightened politicians are thus a boon to the public relations man. And though there may be magic in his appeal under these conditions, it is no less real for that reason.⁴⁹

While this last reason may seem a bit ludicrous, it is an important one nevertheless. Since Kelley's writing, there have been some studies done concerning the effectiveness of persuasive appeals in political advertising and news, and the results have not been encouraging from the politician's viewpoint (These studies are discussed in later chapters, notably the study done by Patterson and McClure). Despite such evidence to the contrary, politicians have some strange belief in the "magic" of persuasive appeals, and would not think of running a campaign without using public relations expertise.

In summary, the public relations professional developed initially as an adjunct of business, serving as adviser and professional communicator. As the mass media continued to develop and the political party declined, the professional public relations counsel found his services in

increasing demand by politicians who were forced to make their appeals through expensive and increasingly complex mass media channels.

Hence, public relations now plays a significant role in campaigning. It will be useful to examine how the political public relations consultant has developed and to consider the extent to which the modern campaign consultant is involved in planning and controlling the campaign.

The first full-time, professional campaign managing firm was established in California in 1933 by Clem Whitaker (a reporter, lobbyist and public relations man) and Leone Baxter (the manager of a local chamber of commerce). Their firm, Campaigns Inc., pioneered in the development of the basic techniques of political merchandizing. From 1933 to 1955, the firm won seventy of the seventy-five campaigns it managed.⁵⁰

The fact that the first campaign management firm was established in California was no coincidence. As political reporter James Perry explains, California in 1933, unlike the rest of the country, had no strong two-party system:

It was a state almost without party discipline or party structure, thanks largely to what Hiram Johnson and his fellow Progressives thought were "reforms" that would purify California for all time. . . . it was during the Hiram Walker era (early in the century) that laws were passed forbidding parties to endorse candidates in primary elections; forcing all candidates, below the level of the state legislature, to run as nonpartisans; establishing procedures for initiative and referendum. And cross-filing in primary elections, a catastrophic Johnson reform, wasn't revoked until 1959.⁵¹

Hence, with no strong, localized party organization, state politicians and special interest groups had to turn to

the professional help of Whitaker and Baxter. The planning techniques used by Whitaker and Baxter reflect the systematic approach taken by public relations professionals toward communications problems:

Whitaker and Baxter are systematic in their approach to the problems of political public relations. According to their own description, their first move, once they have accepted responsibility for a campaign, is to blueprint it. Issues are developed, the time sequence of action is plotted, and the media are selected. Then a plan of campaign is written for the opposition and Whitaker and Baxter's own procedures are adjusted to meet it. Finally, the campaign is budgeted.⁵²

An important part of the Whitaker and Baxter plan was the use of the media. To this end, they established their own feature service:

A regular part of their operation was sophisticated pressure on the mass media in California. In 1936 they established the California Feature Service, through which they distributed a weekly collection of editorials and other material aimed primarily at California's exceptionally large market of small daily newspapers and prospering weeklies.⁵³

The careful planning and attention to media use exhibited by Whitaker and Baxter undoubtedly contributed to their success, and their successful techniques were adapted by the firms that followed. Whitaker and Baxter had the field to themselves for some time, but their success finally attracted other public relations people into the field. The next campaign management firm to be established was Spencer-Roberts & Associates in 1960, also in California. Stuart Spencer and William Roberts established the firm, and their first major success was managing Ronald Reagan's successful

1966 gubernatorial campaign in California:

Reagan, a raw political amateur, needed Spencer-Roberts, and he is the first to admit it. "They supplied the know-how," he told me [James Perry] after his inauguration. "I'd never run for office again without the help of professional managers like Spencer and Roberts."⁵⁴

Reagan's words are typical of the increasing faith politicians put in professional public relations assistance, and few candidates for major state or national offices will undertake a campaign without such assistance.

In the 1960s a new sort of professional public relations firm entered the political arena--the campaign consulting firm. The term "campaign consultant" appears throughout this paper as a handy reference for all political public relations men, but as a public relations type would be quick to point out, a campaign consultant is not the same as a campaign manager. A campaign manager (and managing firms, such as Whitaker and Baxter and Spencer-Roberts) is, as professional manager Joseph Napolitan points out, "a full-time worker who should have day-to-day control and decision-making authority in a campaign, subject only to the veto power of the candidate. He also should have complete control over the expenditure of campaign funds."⁵⁵

As James Perry notes, candidates have always had campaign managers. It was not until firms such as Whitaker and Baxter were established, however, that these managers were most often professional public relations types: "There is, of course, nothing new about political managers as such. Campaigns traditionally have been managed by some one. Some

one: the emphasis is individual. This someone was usually an old friend or an associate of the candidate."⁵⁶

The campaign consultant arrived on the scene when Campaign Consultants Inc. was formed, with offices in Boston and Washington, D.C. The company's first brochure indicates the difference between "managing" and "consulting":

Its basic method of operation is very similar to a well-staffed business consultant firm. CCI has its own staff, or available on a consultant basis from the academic world and business, experienced professionals in every phase of the political campaign.

Utilized to its fullest, CCI enters the campaign early. Its consultants on money-raising lay out a complete plan. Experienced organizers divide your campaign area along logical lines, working with your people, set up your field organization with clear lines of communication and responsibility Above all we are not going to run your campaign. We will give you assistance from announcement to victory speeches⁵⁷

The main difference between managing and consulting is "responsibility." Managers run campaigns, while consultants only advise. It is normal practice to have a campaign manager schooled in public relations who, in turn, brings in a wide variety of such consultants. Significantly, these consultants are experts in a wide variety of areas, of which communications is but a part. Joseph Napolitan describes the various types of consultants:

Consultants come in various breeds. Some are expert campaign managers in their own right; others operate in fields more esoteric and would be total disasters as managers. The general consultants usually are people with broad political background, often including years of experience managing campaigns, who are available to consult on virtually every phase of the campaign. They may specialize in one area or another--media or organization, usually--but have some knowledge of all campaign

operations.

Other consultants are real specialists, some with a great deal of knowledge about over-all campaign operations and some with very little. These include film and radio producers, advertising agencies, time buyers, graphic designers, lighting experts, makeup men.⁵⁸

The large, modern campaign, and certainly none is larger than a presidential campaign, requires a myriad of such specialists to perform a wide variety of tasks. The typical presidential campaign staff may include:

1. A campaign manager, second only to the candidate himself, who makes many of the crucial decisions of the campaign and also controls the money
2. A television producer responsible for producing candidate television ads and also for coordinating TV specials such as documentaries and forums
3. A radio producer who is responsible for production of radio ads
4. A graphics specialist who coordinates campaign graphics ranging from billboards and letterheads to brochures and newspaper ads
5. A time buyer who is responsible for placing all advertising, but especially the campaign's crucial television advertising. (The expertise of the specialists noted in two through five could be obtained by retaining an advertising agency, but most campaign managers prefer to work with independent specialists)
6. A television coach who prompts the candidate for TV appearances and also prepares the audience, if there is one, such as during a question-and-answer session

7. A polling firm which is responsible for initiating and conducting the many surveys required during the course of the campaign
8. An issues group, often consisting of academics or young lawyers, who study and develop issues and prepare position papers for the candidate
9. A press staff who, under the control of the candidate's press director, is in direct contact with the press on a day-to-day basis to facilitate controlled, effective dissemination of information about the candidate and the campaign
10. An advance team which is used for both media and political advance work to insure a smooth flowing campaign with maximum favorable coverage and exposure
11. A scheduler who is an individual or team responsible for scheduling the candidate's campaign to gain maximum favorable exposure
12. An office manager and staff to tend to the logistical and administrative requirements of campaign headquarters and coordinate activities with the traveling candidate
13. A finance chairman who is responsible for all fund-raising activities of the campaign
14. A comptroller or auditor to manage the finances of the campaign especially under federal campaign finance laws which require full accounting for campaign funds
15. A director of organization who is responsible for organizing the state and local level network of chairmen and committees which are still important during modern

election despite the increasing role of the media.⁵⁹

This list indicates the extensive role now played by campaign consultants. The trend may have started in California, but as conditions in the rest of the country came to resemble those in California, the trend toward professionally run campaigns became nationwide, as Dan Nimmo noted in 1970:

. . . professional expertise increasingly directs all phases of modern political campaigns: campaign management through the planning and execution of strategy, organization, and finance; campaign research in all its dimensions; and campaign communication, principally through the mass media.⁶⁰

The increasing need for such expertise has resulted in a shortage of professionals for some time. Public relations expert Paul A. Theis wrote in 1968:

If there's one major void in American life that public relations hasn't filled, it's in the field of politics, where there's a crying need for competent, experienced professionals to handle public relations in political campaigns.

Each election year, the campaign committees of the two major parties [and Theis was public relations director for the Republican committee when he wrote this] receive uncounted requests from candidates for public offices, ranging from county commissioners to Congress, to help them find public relations help for their campaigns. And each year, most of these requests go unfilled.⁶¹

The situation apparently has not improved much since 1968, as evidenced by this comment from David Keene, George Bush's 1968 campaign director:

Good political consultants are in short supply. The techniques of campaigning, the uses made of the media, the computerization of campaign efforts have changed, requiring a more sophisticated approach. And the number of people who can do these things has not increased with the demand.⁶²

Indeed, with more requests for assistance than can be filled, the better of the campaign managers and consultants can afford to pick and choose. This has led to the

phenomenon of considering which clients (candidates) to accept based upon the public relations man's set of criterion for success--criteria different from the more traditional standards of candidate availability. This is discussed in some detail in Chapter IV.

As the politician increasingly seeks professional public relations assistance in response to the growing role of the mass media in the campaign process, the public relations man, as best exemplified by the campaign manager, plays an increasingly important role as adviser. This role for public relations was first expressed by Edward Bernays in 1923:

His [the counselor's] primary function now is not to bring his clients by chance to the public's attention, nor to extricate them from difficulties into which they have already drifted, but to advise his clients how positive results can be accomplished in the field of public relations and to keep them from drifting inadvertently into unfortunate or harmful situations.⁶³

And increasingly, as public relations developed in the business community, it fulfilled this role of adviser. The same has occurred since public relations has entered the field of politics. Kelley, in a rather prophetic statement for 1956, emphasized the key advisory role the public relations consultant was beginning to play in the political campaign:

To give the public relations man responsibility for the expenditure of campaign funds, for the selection and use of the media of communication, and for relations with the personnel of the information media is to go far toward making him a leading influence in shaping the public image of parties and candidates. From available evidence, the delegation to him of decisions in these matters seems to be a fairly frequent practice.

. . . In aspiring to a policy role the political public relations man is following his business brother. In the business world this

has been an aspiration of public relations men increasingly realized in practice: If they began as technicians, they have often become much more than that.⁶⁴

As Melvyn Bloom notes in 1968, no where has the public relations man's role become more dominant than in the presidential campaign:

But to the degree that presidential campaigning is now essentially a process of communication to broad publics, the public relations man and other related professionals hold sway. His profession has become increasingly "scientific," and . . . he now routinely makes a broad use of a whole range of devices and skills, including research, advertising, public opinion polling, data processing, and so on. From the concept of a need to consult with the public relations man in his special areas of expertise has evolved a broader and yet more special profession of campaign consulting and campaign management. Thus, some of the broader skills called for in the waging of a political campaign--organization, negotiation, the syntheses of substantive programs out of the supposed needs and articulated demands of conflicting publics--have now become the dominion of the professional's study and advice, rather than simply the candidate's judgment.⁶⁵

As the importance of the role played by the manager and consultants in the campaign process continues to grow, it is only natural that they increasingly gain access to the candidate, to the point where they become a key part of the candidate's inner circle. Napolitan says such a close relationship is vital for success:

It is imperative that the candidate and the campaign manager develop a close personal relationship if one does not exist before the campaign. The manager will be closer to the candidate during the campaign than anyone except the candidate's wife.⁶⁶

This sort of personal relationship is quite evident at the presidential campaign level, where both the candidate

and his staff come under intense, continuous scrutiny:

. . . the public relations man and various other consultants--advertising executives, copywriters, film producers, television directors, time buyers, advance men, pollsters, data processing experts, and, yes, political scientists--themselves become increasingly important political actors, and their crafts an increasingly important part of the political process. This is particularly true of the presidency, where personal organizations centered around the candidate appear to be decreasing the importance of political "regularity" in the traditional sense.

. . . At the presidential level . . . the candidate and his actions outweigh all other elements of a campaign. The candidate's words, travels, behavior, all aspects of his conduct, are watched intensely. His top team of advisers is, of necessity, a highly personal team.⁶⁷

The almost natural outgrowth of the presidential candidate's need for establishing such an efficient, personal staff of public relations advisers during the campaign is to retain that same staff after the election, as did Richard Nixon in 1968:

The retention of so many of these people on the White House staff in similar capacities following Mr. Nixon's inauguration seems quite significant. It indicates that once a candidate credits public relations practitioners and their skills and the various subtechnologies which they employ with helping to put him in the White House, it is unlikely that he will in any way curtail the use of those individuals, those skills and those subtechnologies once he becomes Chief Executive.⁶⁸

One obvious advantage of retaining the same people is the expertise they will contribute come reelection time. This was certainly an advantage for Nixon in 1972, just as it is for Carter in 1980, as correspondent Elizabeth Drew notes:

Just as the Carter campaign is being run by essentially--in fact, almost exactly--the same people who ran the 1976 campaign (Jordan, Powell,

Caddell, Rafshoon, and to a lesser extent, Kraft and Strauss), so the White House is dominated by the small group that dominated it before last summer's [1979's] noisy shakeups and reorganization. In both cases, Jordan remains the most powerful of the President's aides, and in both cases there are Jordan and Powell and then everyone else Nor did [Edward] Kennedy begin [the 1980 campaign] with a team that had had the experience of working together through a Presidential campaign, as the Carter group had.⁶⁹

The value of such an experienced team was borne out in the primaries. In November 1979, at a conference of campaign consultants held by the New York Times to discuss Carter's 1980 chances of reelection, one consultant noted that, whatever shortcomings Carter's top aides might have, campaigning was not one of them: "Hamilton Jordan and Jody Powell can't run the country, but they're backwoods politicians who can run a campaign that can cut you up pretty bad."⁷⁰

Given the increasing importance of the campaign manager and consultants in all phases of campaigning, it is valuable to examine how these advisers determine campaign and media strategies. It is first necessary to note the differences between campaign and media strategy. The overall plan of action for the campaign is the campaign strategy. Once the campaign strategy is devised, the media strategies, and usually there are two--the news media strategy and the advertising strategy--are determined. The news and advertising strategies are closely coordinated into one overall media strategy, and the media strategy is coordinated with the campaign strategy. Political consultant Arnold Steinberg explains this process:

No news media strategy can evolve in the absence of an overall campaign strategy. This strategy suggests how many voters must be reached in terms of differentiating among demographic groups and in terms of voters who need to (a) know who the candidate is (identification and party); (b) perceive what he is like (image); and (c) identify or associate the candidate with positions on certain issues (issue orientation). News media strategy is confined to generating news, features, editorials, news conferences, interviews, and so forth, but it must be part of a coordinated media strategy that considers both news and advertising media.⁷¹

While the coordinated media strategy is specifically the domain of the public relations experts trained in communications, the overall campaign strategy as well is increasingly being influenced by public relations oriented managers and consultants. In approaching a campaign, the public relations man relies on tried-and-true marketing and communications techniques already in use in other fields. As Dan Nimmo notes:

. . . contemporary political campaigns are not unique but . . . they possess characteristics similar to those of campaigns conducted in business, academic, charitable, and other fields of endeavor; in short, modern political campaigns are based on application of the assumptions and techniques of the communications sciences.⁷²

In formulating the campaign strategy, the public relations men (in the form of campaign manager and his assistant consultants) attempt to formulate a central theme for the campaign. This theme will be the key to both the campaign and media strategies:

As the coordinator of ideas the public relations man is often the one who develops the central theme of a campaign. In such a role, he determines which issues will take precedence, and which will be subordinate, and he molds them into the candidate's basic approach to the voter

In many ways, this is a logical development in the role of the public relations man. If men seeking office regard mass persuasion as the road to success, then the specialist in that technique obviously is going to be very influential in political campaigns. As the public relations man goes farther into the heart of the political process, he is not likely to stop short of crucial political policy formation.⁷³

The importance of the theme, and how the campaign and media strategy revolve around it, are best illustrated by the work of the early masters, Whitaker and Baxter:

They looked first of all for a theme, and they usually came up with one. The theme, they always said, had to be straight, simple and devastating. It must, they liked to say, have more "corn than caviar."

That completed, . . . they began hammering away at all the details--preparation of speakers' manuals, layouts of billboards, radio scripts, design of postcards, campaign buttons, newspaper ads. And everything revolved around the theme that had been preselected.⁷⁴

About the only real difference in the way Whitaker and Baxter determined their theme and tailored their issues in the 1930s, and the way modern campaigners accomplish this, is that Whitaker and Baxter relied on instinct, while modern campaigners rely on research, better known as polling. The amount of political polling done by candidates has increased dramatically. Polling is used by candidates in a wide variety of areas, including advertising, image making, and issue orientation. These areas will be more closely examined in later chapters. Taken as a whole, however, polls are increasingly used to determine campaign strategy:

The public-opinion poll, pollster Walter D. De Vries says, is a tool to measure what is important in a democracy--what the people think and want. It is also important in the sense that it gives the political leader, whether he is an

incumbent or candidate, a sense of direction in trying to provide leadership in solving problems. . . . Polls tell the candidate what are relevant issue structures, his standing with the public (the distance to the goal); and polls suggest the campaign pledges and requirements needed to develop candidate image. . . . the most effective polls are in-depth image and issue polls taken over a period of time to develop a trend line and to allow campaign strategy shifts as indicated.⁷⁵

Hence, polling data is becoming an increasingly important input into determining the overall campaign and media strategy, as well as assisting in formulating specific tactics during the campaign.

In summary, public relations developed early in this century as an adjunct of business. It rose in response to the increasing prominence of mass media and the need for business to get their messages favorably aired in the public opinion forum. As the public relations profession continued to grow in size and expertise, it was almost inevitable that it would branch out into the field of politics, as it did in the 1930s beginning with the work of Whitaker and Baxter. As the conditions which made California ripe for Whitaker and Baxter (specifically the decline of political party influence and the presence of a pervasive mass media) began to spread to the rest of the country, so too did political public relations.

Today, the public relations man, as embodied in the campaign manager and his wide variety of assisting consultants, plays an increasingly important role in the campaign as key adviser and campaign strategist, in addition to his more traditional role as intermediary between the candidate

and the press. Finally, the public relations man brings an increasingly sophisticated technology to bear in the political campaign through the use of modern research techniques.

The New Politics

As a result of the developments discussed in the last two sections--the rise of the mass media campaign and the rise of the campaign consultant--an essentially symbiotic relationship has developed between the candidate and the media. This relationship has resulted in a new style of campaigning which James Perry christened "the new politics" in 1968:

There are two essential ingredients of the new politics. One is that appeals should be made directly to the voters through the mass media. The other is that the techniques used to make these appeals--polling, computers, television, direct mail--should be sophisticated and scientific.⁷⁶

While the definitions vary slightly, the advent of "new politics" was noted by many political watchers and participants in the late 1960s and early 1970s. Campaign consultant Joseph Napolitan noted the trend in his 1972 book:

Everyone has his own definition; let me give you mine:

The new politics is the art of communicating a candidate's message directly to the voter without filtering it through the party organization.

And the best way to do that, in a major election, is through the electronic media⁷⁷

Political consultant Dan Nimmo, writing in 1970, made a similar observation concerning what he called the "mediated campaign," noting that the candidate's direct contact with

the voters is greatly reduced:

The growing insulation of the candidate from the citizen with the advent of the mediated campaign results from many factors. Viable party organizations that once brought the candidate into personal contact with the faithful have declined; partisanship is now more of a symbol with which people identify than a group with which they work. And the growth in the size and diversity of the potential electorate makes it necessary to reach greater numbers of voters quickly and simultaneously. Finally, the theories of mass persuasion mesh with the techniques of the mass media, survey research, and high speed computers to provide precisely the means of contacting vast numbers of voters that candidates demand.⁷⁸

Nimmo, looking ahead to the decade of the 1970s, predicted a "rising demand for . . . 'new politics'":

In a very real sense it [his book, Political Persuaders] is a prologue to the changes that will affect the elections of the 1970s: changes that portend, among other things, attempts to manipulate an electorate; the growth of professional campaigning into a high-cost, high-risk, and high-reward profit industry; the demise of political parties as effective instruments of campaigning; and a rising demand for a "new politics."⁷⁹

Perry, writing before the 1968 presidential election, made a similar prediction on the future of the new politics in the specific area of presidential campaigns:

But someday, I believe, a presidential campaign will be organized in which all these refinements of the new politics will be brought into play. What kind of a campaign would that be?

The candidate's travels (along with the travels of the candidate for Vice-President and a number of other leading party figures) will be scheduled by a computer. The campaign will be laid out by the critical-path method [computerized scheduling of the entire campaign period]. Polls will be taken over and over and analyzed and cross-analyzed. Spot commercials will be prepared weeks in advance of the election, and their impact will be almost subliminal. Researchers will read the polls and study data from a "simulator"; the issues they develop will all be

relevant, and they will be aimed like rifle shots at the most receptive audiences. Researchers will systematically investigate the opposing candidate, and the new techniques will be used to destroy his credibility. When the election is over, and the candidate is victorious, the pollsters will go back to work to see what they did well and what they did badly.

And the candidate? He will be out front, moving from state to state with robot-like precision, being fed the data from the polls and the simulator. He will no doubt be articulate, and probably will be handsome and vigorous. And he may or may not be qualified to be President of the United States.⁸⁰

The accuracy of this prediction has certainly been verified, as Melvyn Bloom notes:

He [Perry] wrote the words . . . in 1967, and the events of the following year proved him perhaps a better prophet than he would have dared to expect. For--except for the simulator . . . --all of the techniques Perry listed were, evidence indicates, employed by the major presidential candidates in 1968.⁸¹

That the age of "new politics," as characterized by direct appeal to the voter via the mass media and the increasing use of professional public relations techniques, is here to stay is a point that few would argue. It remains to examine some of the effects of the new politics, and finally, to determine if the "new" politics is any better, or worse, than the "old".

One effect of the new politics, already hinted at by Dan Nimmo in his description of the "mediated campaign," is that the campaign is becoming increasingly candidate oriented rather than party oriented. Personal staffs built around the candidate, as noted in the last section, are becoming increasingly important. James Perry predicted an increase in such personal organizations over the traditional

party organization:

Candidates for party presidential nominations will, I think, continue to work within the two-party structure. But, more and more, they will rely upon personal organization and professional assistance. Not long ago, it would have been inconceivable to think that an incumbent President could be denied renomination. It is still unlikely--but the possibility, thanks to the new technology, becomes less remote every year.⁸²

A content analysis of McGovern and Nixon advertising in the 1972 campaign shows the increasing importance of the candidate as the center of the campaign rather than the party and its platform. Political researchers C. Richard Hofstetter and Cliff Zukin analyzed a wide variety of print and broadcast advertising and found:

The candidates tended to avoid linkages to the major parties in their advertising during the 1972 campaign, making it a highly personalized, candidate centered affair from that vantage point. Almost none of the themes in the McGovern advertising about McGovern mentioned the Democratic Party; the same was true of mention of the Republican Party in Nixon advertising about Nixon. The same was not true of campaign advertising about the opposition; and nearly all this was unfavorable.⁸³

The emphasis on the candidate and his personality has led to a belief in the importance of image campaigning as part of the new politics. This is examined in more detail in Chapter IV.

Another effect of the new politics results from the dependence on the mass media to transmit the candidate's message. Because of this dependence, the candidate puts more emphasis on media coverage than on direct contact with the voter. This trend was already noted by Dan Nimmo (see his quote on page 57 reference the candidate's "growing insulation

from the citizen" as a result of the new politics). Reporter Jules Whitcover also noticed this trend in the 1976 campaign, where spending limitations imposed by the 1974 amendment to the Federal Election Campaign Act further aggravated the lack of voter-candidate contact:

This ever-growing focus on television by candidates and public alike inevitably diminished the importance and the possibility of direct voter-contact in the general election; the introduction of strict limits on campaign spending, starving grass-roots politics, dealt such contact an even greater blow. The name of the game has been mass-media "exposure"; now this threatened to become virtually the whole game.⁸⁴

It does seem the case that, increasingly, the candidate is made aware of voter concerns through systematic polling rather than face-to-face contact, and the researcher would argue, not without some justification, that such polling techniques are the only efficient method in a large campaign. Also, the primary means of contact between voter and candidate is, as Whitcover notes above, via the intermediary of the media. Increasingly, as will be examined in the next chapter in the discussion of candidate scheduling, the value of the campaign whistlestop is judged not by the crowd of voters it will attract, but by the crowd of regional and national media representatives.

The counterargument to this adverse effect of new politics is that, as Joseph Napolitan notes, the voter had no better chance to meet the candidate under the "old" system of politics than under the new, and perhaps much less of a chance:

The dirtiest politics practiced in America is not to be found in major campaigns where candidates are exposed and revealed to the public through television and radio, but in small-town and small-city elections where the voters never have an opportunity to see or hear the candidates, where the cigar-smoking, big-bellied pols in the back room still literally name the candidates and get them elected to office through often-corrupt political machinery.

This kind of stuff won't work in major campaigns any more. Television is making it possible for candidates to speak directly to the people, and maybe, through the use of cable television, the people will be able to speak back.⁸⁵

Napolitan notes above, at least indirectly, that the media, particularly television, have become the key factor in the nominating process during a large campaign, and not the "back-room pols." This is perhaps in large measure the case now in presidential campaigns, as will be examined in Chapter III.

Another effect of new politics, one which is fairly self-evident, is that campaign costs have sky-rocketed because of the expense of buying time and space for advertising, the cost of polls, and the expense of hiring a large number of public relations specialists. The Federal Election Campaign Act, whatever its shortcomings, has served to hold down expenses in the presidential campaign by establishing mandatory ceilings on expenditures.

The most damning charge concerning the possible adverse effects of the new politics is that there is an increasing likelihood of voter manipulation because of the mass persuasion techniques used by the professional campaigners. This charge has been leveled for years, perhaps starting with Walter Lippmann's warnings in 1922 to beware of the manufacturing

of consent. Other critics include Aldous Huxley, who wrote in 1958:

The political merchandizers appeal only to the weaknesses of voters, never to their potential strength. They make no attempt to educate the masses into becoming fit for self-government; they are content merely to manipulate and exploit them. For this purpose all the resources of psychology and the social sciences are mobilized and set to work.⁸⁶

In a more recent criticism, Dan Nimmo warns in 1970 that the lust for profits could tempt the competitive campaign managers to engage in deliberate deception:

Without question the new technology introduces not only the possibility but indeed the likelihood of systematic deception in electoral politics.

. . . Few campaign technicians deny the potential of their craft for deceiving the electorate but none will admit to having done so. Cases of deception may be isolated, but we would be naive to believe that deception will not occur. Campaign management is a competitive enterprise. To make a profit each agency must accumulate accounts. To entice prospective clients each agency must distinguish itself from its competitors. . . . in the end it could mean a desperation for victory that would systematically mislead the electorate.⁸⁷

Howard White takes this commercial imperative a step further, fearing that the political public relations man's reliance on advertising and marketing techniques from the business world has resulted in "packaged" voters. Melvyn Bloom cites White:

The danger to the American democratic system lies not so much in the use of political public relations as it does from the persistence of this kind of commercial thinking in political situations. It has caused justifiable outrage among thoughtful scholars and other political observers, to wit, Professor Howard White:

What Rosser Reeves is reported to have said in 1952, that he looked upon the voter in a booth as he did upon a man

who was trying to choose between two brands of toothpaste, has been transformed into the assumption not so much that the voter chooses between commodities but that he himself is a commodity, to be packaged and processed and stored away until inventories are counted on Election Day. Commodities, of course, do not choose; they are chosen. And while the press is not really blunt and clear about what is new in present-day campaigns, it seems that it is the processed voter, the voter who does not choose but is chosen.⁸⁸

The fear of voter "processing" is not unfounded, as will be discussed in Chapter IV under image-making.

The whole question of commercialized politics, the idea that, as Perry has noted, "The professional managers are mercenaries; they are willing to go almost anywhere for a buck," has caused some politicians to doubt their reliability.⁸⁹ John Anderson, a 1980 independent presidential candidate, told correspondent Elizabeth Drew:

You can talk to the political consultants and talk to all the vendors to political campaigns, and you always have the nagging thought that their advice might have something to do with the services they render rather than an objective view of the independent candidacy.⁹⁰

The vindictive attacks against the new politics are still going strong as of this 1980 election year, as evidenced by what advertiser Malcolm MacDougall condemned in a speech to the American Association of Advertising Agencies as "Snake Oil Politics":

MacDougall quoted [Senator] Howard Baker: "The business of politics has become so nasty and mean, it is so personalized and sometimes so dreadful that if we don't find some way to recivilize politics in the United States, nobody worth his salt is going to compete."

MacDougall elaborates. "I think Baker's statement aptly sums up the state of politics in America today. I'm sure that a lot of things have worked to create this nasty political atmosphere, but if I had to identify the cause with a single name, I would call it snake oil politics. The TV journalists practice snake oil politics by portraying the political arena as a carnival sideshow. The politicians practice snake oil politics with glib promises of a sure cure for any disease. Political advisers practice snake oil politics with the only advertising left in America that is not guided by the basic principles of truth in advertising.⁹¹

Another recent sample of criticism against the new politics comes from pollster Patrick Caddell, who criticizes two main ingredients of the new politics, polls and television, for producing "gutless" politicians--an interesting criticism since he is such an integral part of the new politics as Jimmy Carter's pollster. Caddell commented during a Playboy interview in February 1980:

The polls and television have in some ways been a great disaster for the political process. . . . they have hastened the decline of the political parties. They have become preselectors of who can run for office in this country. Modern technology overwhelmed the process and drove out some very good people who did not know how to adapt to it. We have produced a professional class of politicians who pose for TV cameras but never do anything else and who are among the most gutless group of people I have ever seen.⁹²

In summary, critics of the "new politics" condemn it for a wide variety of reasons: it isolates the candidate from the voters by emphasizing media contact and technology (particularly research results); it has created a personalized, candidate-oriented campaign in place of a party, platform-oriented campaign; it has added tremendously to the cost of campaigns; it has the potential for deceiving, manipulating,

and packaging the voters; finally, it has resulted in a political system so vile as to be no better than "snake oil politics" practiced by superficial, "gutless" politicians.

Certainly some of this criticism is justified, but is the new politics really any worse than the old machine politics? While many critics, including those already cited, feel that it is, other critics and observers are not so sure. Reporter David Broder explains his initial feelings concerning new politics, and how those feelings changed after a glance at history:

. . . I decided I was going to try to do some hell-raising with the practitioners of the new politics. But I found my efforts were impeded by the memory of what I had read about the campaigns of the pre-electronic period. An earlier philosopher named John Dewey wrote back in 1927 about the politics of that era, a time when he said parties were "not only accepted as a matter of course, but popular imagination could conceive of no other way by which officials (might) be selected and governmental affairs carried on." He explained why this system of politics, why old politics, if you will, was so ruinous from every point of view

He said of the voters: "Instead of being individuals who in the privacy of their consciences made choices which are carried into effect by personal volition, we have citizens who have the blessed opportunity to vote for a ticket of men, mostly unknown to them and which is made up for them by an undercover machine in a caucus whose operations constitute a kind of political pre-destination"

. . . he made an observation about the effect of this kind of politics on the men who were involved, the politicians themselves. He said, "As a rule, what decides the fate of a person who comes up for election is neither his political excellence, nor his political defects. Only exceptional candidates get by on the basis of personal responsibility to the electorate. . . . The tidal waves swamp some, the landslide carries others into offices. Habit, party funds, skills of managers of the machine, . . . the portrait of a candidate with his firm jaw, his lovely wife and children, and a multitude of other irrelevancies, determine the issue."⁹³

As Broder notes, perhaps the new problems are no worse than the old problems. Stanley Kelley takes a similar stand, defying critics to find a "past age in American politics" which was any better than the present:

Often the critiques of the public relation man's activities have a highly moralistic tone. There are no myths to justify his role as a policy-maker in political life. There is no authority to sanctify it. There is only the bare fact of his skill in using words and making himself heard. He is accused of substituting "illusions of his own devising for existing facts. . . ." His examples are characterized as "memorable, whether or not they are illuminating or representative." There is truth in these criticisms, but what one is criticizing cannot be contrasted with a past age in American politics when public issues were sincerely presented and soundly argued. To the contrary, it is the politics of the public relations man, and not traditional practical politics, which posits discussion as real--real in the sense the it can decide a course of events.⁹⁴

Hence, it can be argued either way that new politics is better, or worse, than the old politics. Perhaps more importantly, new politics is here to stay, which means that the media will continue to play a key role in the campaign process, and that the campaign consultants will continue to try to manipulate the media to, in turn, influence the voter.

The actual ability of the public relations man to manipulate the media, or deceive the voters, has been a cause of much concern, as noted by the earlier comments of such critics as Huxley, Nimmo, and Bloom. In reality, the impact of such persuasive efforts via the media is in doubt. However, impact notwithstanding, the politician is convinced of the importance of the media in the campaign process:

Political scientists studying the impact of listening to or reading reported news have been unable to document significant effects upon the attitudes, cognitions, or behavior of citizens. The effect may be there, but we have not been able to demonstrate it. In any case, political science findings notwithstanding, those who manage presidential campaigns operate on the conviction that what the media say about them will⁹⁵ affect their candidates' votes on election day.

Journalist William Glavin makes a similar observation concerning the politicians' belief in the power of the press (and the consequent need to influence it):

The prevailing opinion in America is that the media greatly affect the way voters think about issues and candidates. We need only look at the way our public servants and would-be public servants alternately court and curse the press to see that politicians are convinced that their futures are greatly affected by what the press says about their presence. Indeed, candidates spend vast sums of money for the services of image makers, media experts who specialize in making people look good to the voters through the media.⁹⁶

The candidate's ability to persuade the voter through mass-mediated messages has been a subject of considerable research in the last several decades. Findings in these studies indicate that the effects of the candidate's persuasive messages are limited. Some of the more specific results of this research will be examined in later chapters.

Even limited effects, however, are sufficient to attract the attention and concern of the candidate and his campaign consultants. Consequently, the media play an important role in the candidate's efforts to gain office.

The rise of the mass media campaign has caused a corresponding reliance by candidates on the professionally managed campaign, resulting in what critics term the "new

politics." In this era of new politics, the campaign consultant and the press interact in a relationship that, while often adversarial, is primarily symbiotic.

FOOTNOTES

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²Jules Witcover, Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972-1976 (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), pp. 556-557.

³Ibid., p. 226.

⁴Arterton, pp. 26-27.

⁵Herbert M. Baus and William B. Ross, Politics Battle Plan (New York: The Macmillan Co., 1968; London: Collier-Macmillan Ltd., 1968), p. 307.

⁶Ray White, ed., "The 1980 Campaign," Washington Journalism Review 2 (January/February 1980):56.

⁷Arterton, p. 30.

⁸John Midgley, "American Politics and the Press: A View from Abroad," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: Role of the Mass Media in American Politics 417 (September 1976): 110.

⁹Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), p. 39.

¹⁰Daniel J. Boorstin, The Image: A Guide to Pseudo-Events in America (New York: Atheneum, 1961), p. 13.

¹¹Ibid., pp. 13-14.

¹²Ibid.

¹³James M. Perry, Us & Them: How the Press Covered the 1972 Election (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1973), p. 4.

¹⁴F. Christopher Arterton, "Campaign Organizations Confront the Media-Political Environment," in Race for the Presidency: The Media and the Nominating Process, ed. James David Barber (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 5-6.

¹⁵Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man (New York: The American Library, Inc., Signet Books, 1966), pp. 182-183.

¹⁶Michael J. Robinson, "Television and American Politics: 1956-1976," The Public Interest no. 48 (Summer 1977): 20-21.

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¹⁸Stanley Kelley, Professional Public Relations and Political Power (Baltimore, Maryland: The John Hopkins Press, 1956), pp. 207-8.

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²⁰Richard A. Watson, The Presidential Contest: With a Guide to the 1980 Race (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), pp. 66-68.

²¹Richard E. Cohen, "Strict Spending Limits on Contributions and Candidates," National Journal Election '80 Handbook 11 (20 October 1979): 1746.

²²Jonathan Moore and Janet Fraser, eds. Campaign for President: The Managers Look at '76 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1977), p. 33.

²³Maxwell Glen, "It's More Expensive to Run for President as Inflation Takes to the Campaign Trail," National Journal 12 (23 February 1980): 311.

²⁴Witcover, pp. 14-15.

²⁵Moore and Fraser, p. 151.

²⁶Arterton, "Campaign Organizations Confront the Media-Political Environment," p. 9.

²⁷Thomas E. Patterson, The Mass Media Election: How Americans Choose Their President (New York: Praeger Publishers, forthcoming), p. 3.

²⁸Watson, p. 93.

²⁹McLuhan, p. 280.

³⁰Robinson, p. 7.

³¹*Ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

³²*Ibid.*, p. 9

³³*Ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

³⁴Patterson, p. 5.

³⁵Melvyn H. Bloom, Public Relations and Presidential Campaigns: A Crisis in Democracy (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell Company, 1973), p. 212.

³⁶Patterson, p. 5.

³⁷"Pennsylvania Politicking," Broadcasting 98 (28 April 1980): 26.

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³⁹Ibid., p. 248.

⁴⁰Edward L. Bernays, Crystallizing Public Opinion (New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1961), p. 57.

⁴¹Ibid.

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⁴³Ibid., p. 34.

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⁴⁵Kelley, p. 27.

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⁴⁹Ibid.

⁵⁰Nimmo, p. 36.

⁵¹James M. Perry, The New Politics: The Expanding Technology of Political Manipulation (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1968), p. 9.

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⁵³Perry, The New Politics, pp. 13-14.

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⁵⁵Joseph Napolitan, The Election Game and How to Win It (New York: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1972) pp. 5-6.

- ⁵⁶Perry, The New Politics, p. 8.
- ⁵⁷Ibid., p. 34.
- ⁵⁸Napolitan, p. 6.
- ⁵⁹Ibid., pp. 158-60.
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- ⁶²"The Candidates: Getting Their Acts Together," Broadcasting 97 (5 November 1979): 36.
- ⁶³Bernays, p. 56.
- ⁶⁴Kelley, pp. 211-12.
- ⁶⁵Bloom, pp. 242-43.
- ⁶⁶Napolitan, p. 17.
- ⁶⁷Bloom, p. 255.
- ⁶⁸Ibid., p. 227.
- ⁶⁹Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter At Large: 1980: The President," New Yorker, 14 April 1980, p. 136.
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- ⁷¹Arnold Steinberg, The Political Campaign Handbook: Media, Scheduling, and Advance (Lexington, Massachusetts: Lexington Books, D. C. Heath and Company, 1976), p. 39.
- ⁷²Nimmo, p. 5.
- ⁷³Bloom, p. 30.
- ⁷⁴Perry, The New Politics, p. 12.
- ⁷⁵Ibid., pp. 78-79.
- ⁷⁶Ibid., p. 7.
- ⁷⁷Napolitan, p. 65.
- ⁷⁸Nimmo, p. 31.
- ⁷⁹Ibid., p. ix.

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- ⁸¹Bloom, p. 42.
- ⁸²Perry, The New Politics, p. 218.
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- ⁸⁵Napolitan, pp. 111-12.
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- ⁸⁷Nimmo, p. 195.
- ⁸⁸Bloom, p. 246.
- ⁸⁹Perry, The New Politics, p. 217.
- ⁹⁰Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter At Large: 1980: Anderson," New Yorker, 12 May 1980, p. 53.
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- ⁹²"Playboy Interview: Patrick Caddell," Playboy, February 1980, p. 76.
- ⁹³David Broder, "And What About a Hitler?" in The Political Image Merchants: Strategies for the Seventies, eds. Ray E. Hiebert et al. (Washington, D.C.: Acropolis Books Ltd., 1975), pp. 222-24.
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CHAPTER II

HOW THE CAMPAIGN CONSULTANT INFLUENCES THE MEDIA

The Media: The Consultant's Marketing Tool

The campaign manager and his consultants formulate an overall campaign strategy from which a media strategy is then derived. Implementing this strategy involves communicating the desired messages (obviously, messages favorable to the candidate) to the voters via channels of mass communication. In light of this, the consultant considers the media a means to an end, and the various channels of the media are viewed as so many tools. "Tools" is the long-standing public relations term for media, and it is so taught in the country's most widely used public relations textbook.¹

If not the specific term, the concept of the media as public relations "tools" dates to the first book on public relations, written by Edward Bernays in 1923, in which Bernays describes the media as "instruments" for conveying public relations-created events:

First of all, there are the circumstances and events he [the public relations consultant] helps to create. After that there are the instruments by which he broadcasts facts and ideas to the public; advertising, motion pictures, circular letters, booklets, handbills, speeches, meetings, parades, news articles, magazine articles, and whatever other mediums there are through which public attention is reached and influenced.²

This concept of media use has changed little since 1923, as noted in this description by consultant Arnold Steinberg of the media as a "marketing tool" in the campaign:

Media is used as a marketing tool by generating news and purchasing advertising to project a certain image and emphasize particular issues--to reach voters who are most likely to support the candidate if they know who he is or how he stands on issues. Ideally, media should be used to reach those with a higher probability of supporting the candidate before reaching those with a lower probability. . . . Wisdom at the highest levels in the campaign is irrelevant unless the campaign can utilize media effectively. This requires knowledge and understanding of the media, its historical development, customs, traditions, practices, and contemporary nature.³

Media tools available for implementing the media strategy fall into two categories. Steinberg calls them the news-generating component and the advertising component in his overall definition of media:

Media is the delivery of messages both through communications organizations and by the campaign itself. News, features, columns, interviews, editorials, and the like are part of the news-generating component of campaign marketing. Many identical messages delivered simultaneously through the print and electronic media, billboards, bus and subway advertising, and so forth represent the advertising component of campaign strategy.⁴

The terms more commonly used by public relations consultants for these two categories of media tools are "controlled" and "uncontrolled," as noted by consultant Joseph Napolitan:

Media divides into two categories, paid and unpaid, or, if you prefer, as I sometimes do, controlled and uncontrolled.

Paid, or controlled, media is what you produce and place yourself. Unpaid, or uncontrolled, media includes things such as press conferences, interviews,

news spots, debates, and other televised or broadcast activities over which the candidate and his staff do not have direct and complete control.⁵

As was discussed briefly in the last chapter, the campaign's central theme must be coordinated in both the public (uncontrolled) media and the advertising (controlled) media. This chapter will discuss both categories of media. Coordination between the two will be discussed further in the section in this chapter on advertising.

While the consultant's use of both categories of media will be considered, the area of primary concern is the consultant's ability to influence, or manipulate, the uncontrolled media. Candidates and their consultants consider advertising, while important, to be insufficient by itself to win an election. The public media must also be used. This belief is, perhaps, an indirect verification of the important role played by the mass media in the modern campaign process. Edward Bernays was aware of the importance of the media in the "modern" society of the 1920s, and he advised anyone trying to sell a point of view to make use of it:

Now it must be understood that the proponent of a point of view, whether acting alone or under the guidance of a public relations counsel, must utilize existing avenues of approach. Modern conditions are such that it is not feasible to build up independent organs. Innovators and innovations cannot create their own channels of communication. They must for a great part work through the existing daily press, the existing magazine, the existing lecture circuit, existing advertising mediums, the existing motion picture channels and other means for the communication of ideas.⁶

This need to work within existing media channels to gain access to the public is nowhere more apparent than in the modern presidential campaign, as noted by political scientist F. Christopher Arterton:

That presidential candidate organizations should attempt to exploit the mass media is hardly surprising. The system under which we nominate and elect Presidents imposes a burden of rapid and repetitive communications with a diverse citizenry which temporary political organizations are simply incapable of achieving. It is natural for them to turn to the durable communication structures in order to campaign among a vast electorate. While an advertising program is almost always undertaken as a necessary component in the deployment of campaign resources, candidate organizations also attempt to load onto the media the costs of voter communication through the adoption of explicit strategies for dominating news coverage.⁷

Hence, time and financial constraints, coupled with the large size of the constituency to be reached, are primary factors leading to the presidential candidate's belief in the need for manipulating the public media in addition to conducting the usual advertising campaign. Another reason why candidates and consultants believe in the importance of using the public media is that they feel public media messages are more believable. The campaign management firm of Whitaker and Baxter provides a good example of acceptance of this belief:

While Whitake and Baxter can make their pamphlets and poster say exactly what they want them to say, they have emphasized in connection with their campaign for the American Medical Association that "It is vital . . . that much of this flow of words should reach the people through normal channels, rather than through direct publicity releases." This is a way of avoiding the public skepticism that blunts the effect of clearly identified propaganda. They seek favorable prejudgments

not only of their appeals but also of the media in which they appear.⁸

Concurring with Whitaker and Baxter is television correspondent Robert MacNeil, who observes that, "Politicians need news exposure because it has two supreme advantages: it is free and it presents them in a context of credibility. They have no choice but to contrive means to exploit it."⁹

For those candidates who do not appreciate the need for using both the public media and advertising, defeat is a very real possibility. Perhaps the best example of a candidate who learned from his earlier mistakes is Richard Nixon. Writer Joe McGinniss, in his book Selling of the President 1968, said Nixon's failure to win the 1960 presidential election occurred because " . . . he was too few of the things a President had to be--and because he had no press to lie for him and did not know how to use television to lie about himself."¹⁰

By 1968, however, Richard Nixon had learned the value of using the public media to gain favorable coverage. As correspondent Timothy Crouse notes: ". . . his [Nixon's] basic attitude (which was that reporters were scum) hadn't changed. But he had smartened up and learned one crucial lesson--to 'give correspondents a lot of news,' in the form of handouts and a few discreet one-to-one interviews."¹¹

Indeed, a candidate who cannot, or does not, gain the maximum amount of favorable media exposure could possibly find himself in what political scientist Dan Nimmo calls the "vicious cycle." Nimmo uses Hubert Humphrey's

1968 presidential campaign as an example:

In 1968 public polls in September gave Richard Nixon a substantial margin over Hubert Humphrey. One of Humphrey's campaign technicians, Joseph Napolitan, believed that the polls revealed Humphrey's lack of media exposure rather than a greater popular preference for Nixon. But Napolitan could raise no money for a media campaign since potential contributors, reading the published polls, gave Humphrey no chance for victory. There is, thus, a vicious cycle in modern campaign techniques: media exposure affects poll results, poll results affect fund-raising, fund-raising affects media exposure.¹²

Consequently, the modern presidential candidate and his consultants will always give considerable priority to obtaining favorable public media coverage, thereby hoping to avoid the "vicious cycle" described above. As political scientist Arterton notes, "media considerations" are a key part of all campaign decisions on strategy and tactics:

The influence of campaign journalism is felt on its most profound level . . . in the formulation of political strategies around media considerations. To the extent that they have control over the activities of their organizations, campaign managers plan with a view toward media interpretations as one facet of practically anything undertaken by the campaign.¹³

Not only do campaign consultants actively consider ways to make use of the public media as marketing tools, but they also openly admit to the subjective nature of the coverage they are trying to obtain for their candidate. Joseph Napolitan says it is the media's job to reveal the candidate's "warts," not the consultant's:

As an ex-newspaper reporter, I don't have a lot of sympathy with columnists and commentators who criticize people in my business because we show the candidates in their best light. That's our job. If the candidate has warts, it's their

job to reveal them, not ours. I don't knowingly work for candidates who lie--but neither do I insist upon my candidates sliding knives into their own bellies so they will slowly bleed to death during a campaign. If a candidate has a drinking problem or a messy divorce or was involved in a fracas earlier in his career, it's not my job to trot these facts before the public. If he's asked about them, tell the truth--but don't expect us to require a candidate to bare his flaws unilaterally.¹⁴

Such a subjective point of view is perhaps only to be expected from the campaign consultant who is, after all, a hired worker. What might aggravate this tendency is the obsessive nature of campaigning--so obsessive, in fact, that there can be no such thing as "objectivity," as Jeff Greenfield notes (and Greenfield, who has been both a reporter and a consultant, has seen both sides of the fence):

On Election Day, all of the hopes and dreams of a campaign organization will be enhanced or dashed. Imagine how much more intensely you would lead your life if you knew it would end on a given date in the not-too-distant future, and you have some idea of how obsessive a political campaign can be--and how deeply politicians resent any outside force that stands between them and victory. Remember, too: unlike paranoids, politicians have real enemies. . . . Someone else wants that same victory, and every critical comment on a politician in fact helps those running against that politician.

This means that within a campaign there is no such thing as objectivity.¹⁵

It would indeed seem possible, perhaps probable, that the intensely subjective nature of campaigning would inevitably result in the consultant's desire to influence, or manipulate, the public media covering his candidate, and to feel that the media are out to "get" the candidate, as indicated by this comment by Gary Hart, George McGovern's campaign director in the 1972 presidential campaign:

A defense of the press. We were so convinced sometimes in '71 that Muskie was getting all the press and that McGovern was getting none that we commissioned one of our volunteers to spend a tedious number of days at the Library of Congress measuring column-inches. We were planning to get a room full of press people then and just let them have it. Much to our chagrin, as it turned out, the totals were within a fraction of the same. It is very easy in a campaign to feel subjectively that your man isn't getting the coverage when, factually and statistically, he is.¹⁶

And so, the campaign consultant, who is hired to present his client in the best possible light, may be further influenced, even if only subconsciously, toward a subjective approach by the obsessive, victory-at-all-costs nature of campaigning.

In summary, the campaign consultant implements the campaign's media strategy via the marketing tools of the media, which include both the public (uncontrolled) media and advertising (controlled) media. The candidate and his messages, consistent with the overall campaign theme, are presented in a manner that will result in the maximum amount of favorable coverage. The candidate, because of limited time and funds, coupled with the increased credibility inherent in the public media, is convinced of the importance of successfully influencing, or manipulating, the public media. Advertising alone is not sufficient. To this end, the candidate hires campaign consultants whose self-stated function is to subjectively present their candidate in the most favorable light, a tendency which may be further enhanced by the obsessive nature of campaigning.

Given the importance placed on media manipulation

by the candidate and his consultants, it is worthwhile to examine the specific techniques and tactics employed to this end.

The Concept of Providing Service
to the Public Media

In any discussion of techniques and tactics employed by the campaign consultants to influence the public media, the key public relations concept to keep foremost in mind is "service and cooperation." Discussions of the adversarial nature of press-candidate relations notwithstanding, the underlying reason for the success of public relations techniques is that they are based on service to the media, and, as Edward Bernays notes in 1923, the journalist appreciates the assistance:

The journalist of to-day [sic], while still watching the machinations of the so-called "press agent" with one half-amused eye, appreciates the value of the service the public relations counsel is able to give him.

To the newspaper the public relations counsel serves as a purveyor of news.¹⁷

This concept of cooperative service to the press is quite evident in the political campaign. Consultants Herbert Baus and William Ross point out the importance of servicing the press during the campaign:

The modern professional communications man makes it as easy as he can for the reporter to cover the news. This means the news must be made available at the proper time as precisely and completely as possible for instant transmittal. It means that the physical task of news reporting must be facilitated, particularly under mobile campaign conditions.

That is why the expert campaign impresario lifts all possible logistical load from the newsman's back.

He keeps the newsman informed. When there is travel, he provides the accommodations, transfers the newsman between points, meets him at hotels with room keys, provides laundry and room service, makes certain there are telephones and typewriters handy. He anticipates all the problems of reportage, and whenever possible, he helps solve them in advance. No campaign task is more important than this, and none deserves higher priority in the campaign budget.¹⁸

Campaign consultant Arnold Steinberg shares a similar philosophy toward servicing the press:

The campaign policy toward the news media must be twofold. First, the attitude must be positive; the candidate and news director should be accessible, open, and honest as well as personable, cordial, and cooperative. Second, the policy must be service oriented--that is, its objective is to make coverage of the campaign as easy as possible for each journalist. The relationship between campaign and news media should stress cooperation rather than the competition engendered by adversaries. The campaign with a positive attitude, service-oriented policy, and steady flow of news will find the news media receptive to reporting the campaign.¹⁹

Steinberg notes further that, not only must this attitude of service and cooperation be emphasized, but it also must be prevalent at all levels of the campaign. To insure that the service concept is understood by all, a publicity manual should be prepared:

Any [large] campaign should prepare a comprehensive publicity manual incorporating the campaign's news philosophy, positive attitude toward the news media, and explanation of servicing. . . . The booklet should stress how local volunteer leaders can maximize publicity in the area, with special emphasis on establishing the committee, opening an office, announcing committee appointments and membership, local endorsements, fund-raising events, volunteer and precinct activity, and any events with publicity potential.²⁰

In short, whatever tactics and techniques are

employed, an overall theme at all levels of the campaign is service and cooperation with the media. The campaign staff that fails to adopt this theme could find itself in for a hard campaign as far as the media are concerned:

If the candidate and news director are open and cooperative, reporters will overlook an occasional error by the candidate or campaign. If the campaign's attitude is negative and its servicing of the media poor, journalists will tend to seize on the candidate's every slip of the tongue. Traveling media are especially eager to maintain a cordial relationship, but antagonistic or inept campaigns make it easy for some reporters to "cut-up" the candidate or campaign. . . .

The campaign with a positive attitude, proper servicing, and competent advancing will find itself and its staff described in stories as professional, efficient, and "politically savvy." Even if the campaign is not explicitly praised, stories will portray the candidate and campaign more positively. Incompetent media servicing insures that the campaign will be explicitly described as novice, inefficient, or "amateurish." Even if the campaign is not so characterized explicitly, the reporters' contempt will permeate the coverage of the campaign.²¹

The extent to which the press' coverage is explicitly biased by the quality of service is certainly debatable, but Steinberg's point about the impression of efficiency created by good servicing is well taken, as exemplified by the 1972 primary campaign, during which Timothy Crouse compared Hubert Humphrey's press operation to George McGovern's:

To the men whom duty had called to slog along the side of the Hump, the switch to the McGovern Bus brought miraculous relief. "You gotta go see the Hump's pressroom, just to see what disaster looks like," a reporter urged me. The Humphrey pressroom, a bunker-like affair in the bowels of the Beverly Hilton, contained three tables covered with white tablecloths, no typewriters, no chairs, no bar, no food, one phone (with outside lines available only to registered guests), and no reporters. The McGovern press suite, on the other hand, contained twelve typewriters, eight phones,

a Xerox Telecopier, a free bar, free cigarettes, free munchies, and a skeleton crew of three staffers. . . . As the new arrivals to the McGovern Bus quickly found out, the McGovern staff ran the kind of guided tour that people pay great sums of money to get carted around on. They booked reservations on planes, trains and hotels; gave and received messages; and handled Secret Service accreditation with a fierce, Teutonic efficiency. And handed out reams of free information.²²

The concept of service and cooperation is well established, and as can be imagined from the above example, a great deal of time, money and personnel are required in a large campaign to insure this servicing is adequately accomplished. Ideally, the concept of service to the media permeates the thinking of personnel at all levels of the campaign, from the candidate to the local committeemen, but in addition, a portion of the campaign staff is specifically designated as responsible for servicing the media--the press staff. As noted in the summarized list of campaign staff functions in the last chapter, the press staff is but one portion of the overall campaign effort, but it is an increasingly important portion. An example of the extensiveness of such a press staff is the Carter-Mondale press operation in 1980 (an operation, incidentally, separate from the even more extensive White House press staff):

Headed by Linda Peek, the [press] staff includes seven professionals in Washington and eight paid staff members in the field. Volunteers double the total complement.

Peek and assistant press secretary Scott Widmeyer supervise an operation that includes a radio actuality system, which feeds spots to broadcasting stations from Washington and the field offices; an office that prepares briefing papers and press packets; a press monitoring service, that compiles a news summary for in-house distribution; a section

that arranges press conferences and news briefings; and a special projects group that serves as liaison for organized supporters such as committees of artists and athletes committees.

Since the first of the year [this article was written in early April], the Carter-Mondale press office has sent out about 10 press releases each week. It receives more than 200 telephone calls daily over nine lines. Its mailing list includes almost 350 Washington reporters. Special releases are sent to labor, entertainment and ethnic publications.²³

Most of the specific activities mentioned above will be elaborated on later in this chapter. Suffice it to say, however, that the nature of press servicing in a campaign as large as a presidential one is increasingly a large, complicated operation.

At the center of this operation is the news director, or press secretary. He or she should be in overall charge of press operations. Steinberg describes the responsibilities of this spokesman:

The campaign should have only one spokesperson other than the candidate. Even the campaign manager should defer to this spokesperson--usually called a press secretary, news secretary, press aide, or communications or news director. Ideally, this person should have experience as a working journalist

The spokesperson handles all news media contacts, except for those he delegates to others. . . .

. . . The spokesperson must have the full confidence of the candidate. The candidate and spokesperson should have rapport. . . . The spokesperson should have the authority to speak for the candidate, and the news media must understand that this authority is unambiguous. Similarly, the news media should have no doubts that the spokesperson understands the campaign's strategy and plans, is aware of what the candidate and campaign are doing, and has easy access to the candidate, campaign manager, and staff.²⁴

In keeping with the concept of service and cooperation, the press secretary should be not only a friend, but an

"advocate" of the campaign reporters who are providing the candidate his coverage:

The news director should have an amiable, even-tempered personality, and he should not seek confrontations with the news media. . . . The news director should be poker faced, not easily excited, and able to feel at ease and project confidence, even under the most penetrating, intense questioning. Although his prime responsibility is to the candidate, the news director should be perceived by the news media as their advocate--that is, a person who is interested in generating relevant news stories, arranging interviews, helping journalists with deadlines and scheduling problems, and so forth.

The news director or spokesperson should be perceived as open and candid; responsiveness need not compromise discretion. The competent spokesperson can answer questions succinctly and honestly, without misleading or lying to journalists.²⁵

Indeed, as noted by political scientist Arterton, the campaign spokesperson can carry the advocacy role as far as to intercede with the reporter's organization on the reporter's (and indirectly, the candidate's) behalf:

Campaign personnel are aware that reporters and correspondents are themselves engaged in bureaucratic politics in their own organizations. The structure of news reporting offers opportunities for campaigners to aid, always subtly, the work of "our reporters" in competitive struggles with other reporters within a single media organization. . . .

Perceiving news reporting organizations as political systems, campaigners tend to view journalists assigned to them as something akin to ambassadors from media organizations to the campaign. . . . While like ambassadors, their loyalties to their organizations are deemed beyond subversion, they can, nonetheless, be utilized on occasion as an advocate of the campaign's viewpoint within their own political system.²⁶

There is little doubt that the wise campaign news director and his staff, by being friendly to the point of

serving as the reporters' advocate within the campaign as well as with the reporters' parent organizations, can do much to enhance the candidate's coverage (As long as, as noted above by Steinberg, they remember that "responsiveness need not compromise discretion."). Correspondent Hunter Thompson, in a Washington Journalism Review interview, said friendly relations helped in Carter's 1976 success:

WJR: Do you think Carter knew about the after hours habits of his staff?

Thompson: Oh yeah. Remember, you're still working in a campaign at four in the morning. For Carter it worked out nicely that the most influential press people got along so well with his staff

WJR: How much do you think that clubbiness between the blue chip reporters and the blue chip assistants helped Carter get the coverage he wanted?

Thompson: A tremendous amount. It gave Carter credibility. Once you're sympathetic to a candidate, it's easy to see why he might be better.²⁷

"Clubbiness," however, must be tempered with discretion. As discussed later in this chapter, a staff that is too open and unguarded can do considerable harm to the campaign's coverage.

On the whole, however, the concept of service and cooperation is the key to successful media relations, and a successful press staff, headed by a spokesperson, is dedicated to providing this service. The press staff assists the media in a variety of ways. Most assistance is aimed at providing useable information, or news, about the candidate,

his plans and positions. This information is made available in several traditional formats, most notable of which is the press release.

The news release, in addition to simply providing information that may result in a news story, fulfills the related functions of providing background information and even "subtle indoctrination":

News releases are mailed not only to secure news coverage based on their contents, but to create the impression the campaign is moving; and they provide valuable background information. Reporters traveling with the candidate, or who may cover the candidate in the future, may consult their own media outlet files on the candidate. Many news conference questions, interview questions, and the points and questions raised on broadcast interview and talk shows reflect the subtle indoctrination of the campaign mailing. These mailings predispose reporters to talk about issues of concern to the candidate and campaign. Each news media outlet's file on the candidate is largely, sometimes wholly, a collection of news release mailings28

And the press release, says consultant Paul Theis, must be professionally done to provide, if nothing else, an impression of competence and organization within the campaign, particularly at the lower levels of a large campaign:

Outside of occasional visits to newsrooms in his area, the only contact the candidate usually has with newspaper editors and broadcasters are the press releases that his public relations man sends across their desks. If the releases are sloppily written or phrased like legal briefs, if they fail to carry proper release dates or to contain the who-what-when-where-why-and-how of news stories, the editor or broadcaster may toss them in the wastebasket. And his impression of the candidate and his campaign is shaped by what he has seen: Sloppy, disorganized and amateurish. If, on the other hand, the approach is professional, then the editor or broadcaster is impressed that the campaign should be taken

seriously.²⁹

To insure that such a level of professionally done releases is attained at all levels of the campaign, Steinberg recommends that the campaign publicity manual include sample news release formats. This will insure quality releases even at the local level, where the public relations expertise is not available:

Any [large] campaign should prepare a publicity manual for local campaign chairmen, publicity chairmen, or aides. This manual should include sample "form" news releases to provide the formal and general wording for releases essential to the formation and activities of a local campaign committee. Sample releases should include announcement of the committee's formation, naming of a chairman, opening of a headquarters, local endorsements, announcement of various types of committee events, announcements of upcoming visits by the candidate, and so on. . . .

Form releases guarantee a standard format for all campaign releases; their suggested quotations help insure substantive consistency (e.g., a prominent local citizen endorsing the candidate will be quoted for citing reasons the campaign wishes to publicize). The form release, together with other guidelines and materials in the campaign manual, should make it easy for a local chairman or coordinator to produce a release promptly.³⁰

Final points in the fine art of political news releases include maintenance of a good media list and proper delivery of the release. "Delivery" is far more than merely mailing out the releases:

No political campaign can afford to rely exclusively on the postal service for delivering news releases. Personal visits and regular telephone calls are far more important. Hand delivery of news releases is much more timely than the mail The higher level campaigns emphasize hand delivery even more, but not for an entire media list of thousands, but for the news media on the most pressing deadlines.

. . . The fastest delivery method relies on messenger teams The campaign that hand

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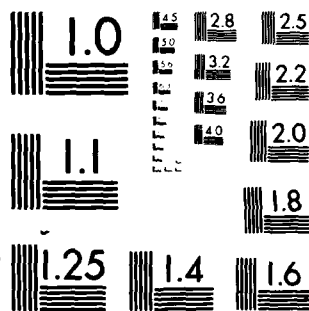
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MICROCOPY RESOLUTION TEST CHART
NATIONAL BUREAU OF STANDARDS-1963-A

delivers many releases in a large metropolitan media market may need several messengers or teams to insure that all of the releases are delivered quickly. The wire services and media outlets closest to their deadlines usually receive the releases first.

. . . The [large] campaign should strive for simultaneous hand delivery of releases in different media markets. For example, when a news release is completed at the main headquarters of a . . . candidate, it can be sent by telecopier to other campaign headquarters or volunteers' homes in major media markets.³¹

Deciding who receives releases, and the method of delivery (hand versus mail), requires that proper lists be maintained:

Essentially the campaign has three different lists: the media, mailing, and hand delivery lists. The media list includes the names of all relevant publishers, editors, and broadcast news directors as well as reporters. It is usually a card file system [if not computerized]

The mailing list is not an information system: it extrapolates the names and titles of those individuals in each media outlet who should receive campaign mailings (the media list differentiates between names stored for information purposes and those on the mailing list). The mailing list also includes volunteer campaign chairmen, leaders, coordinators, and others who should be sent campaign mailings that will keep them informed and enable them to feel a sense of participation. The third list is quite limited; it includes only the names of individuals and media outlets that should receive releases by hand.³²

The news release, while it certainly remains one of the key methods of information distribution in a campaign, is supplemented by a variety of other public relations devices, one of which is the audiovisual news release (particularly the audio release for radio stations, as described here by Joseph Napolitan):

Radio, too, should be used to full advantage. One way is to feed stations tape-recorded messages from the candidate, sometimes two or three times a

day. The candidate can record a message and have this message placed on an instrument attached to a telephone. Radio stations can call in, toll-free, and pick the candidate's message off the instrument without the necessity of anyone in campaign headquarters even answering the phone.

It's an easy way to operate, but it puts the initiative on the stations to make the call. A much more-effective way of accomplishing the same objective, although it takes more work on the part of the campaign staff, is to have someone call each of the stations in the state or in the district every day, or every other day, or to transmit special information they believe will have interest to that station's listening audience.

. . . Acceptance to offers like this runs between 75 and 90 per cent.³³

Another important device for disseminating information, as well as making the life of the journalist easier, in the best traditions of media servicing, is the advance text of a candidate's speech:

The advance text of the candidate's speech is given to reporters both to make their jobs easier and to insure accurate reporting of the text Distributing an advance text well before the speech permits the traveling journalist to complete and file . . . the story before the speech and his possible deadline. The journalists can relax during the speech; some reporters have been known to even avoid attending altogether. The advance text is especially valuable for television and radio personnel; it enables them to determine precisely which portions of the speech they wish to film (letting them cue camera operators) or tape record.³⁴

A final method to be considered, though this has by no means been an all-inclusive study of the press staff's means of information dissemination, is the media information kit:

The basic source of information about the candidate and campaign should be the media information kit. At least one kit should be mailed to each media outlet before the campaign officially begins or in its initial stage. . . . The kit should be given to any traveling reporters who join the campaign

entourage, any reporter who visits campaign headquarters, or any reporter who requests background information on the candidate.³⁵

As is evident by the variety of informational tools available for use by the campaign's press staff, the campaign staff's ability to service the media is considerable, assuming sufficient time, funds, and personnel are devoted to the task.

There are several corollaries to the concept of media servicing which must also be considered. Not only must the informational tools discussed above be put to use by the campaign consultant, but they must be used properly. In order to assure their proper use, the press staff keeps these corollaries in mind: (1) the information as presented must conform to journalistic styles, and this in turn requires that the press staff have a thorough understanding of the mechanics of journalism as applied to the various media; (2) the staff must make the best possible use of all available channels of the media, and at all levels (local, state and national in the presidential campaign); and (3) the staff, while using these informational devices to the maximum extent possible, must not overdo it.

The first corollary to media servicing is a well-established one, dating back to Bernay's 1923 text:

Truthful and accurate must be the material which the public relations counsel furnishes to the press and other mediums. In addition, it must have the elements of timeliness and interest which are required of all news--and it must suit the particular needs of each particular newspaper and, even more than that, it must suit the needs of the particular editor in whose department it

is hoped that it will be published.

Finally, the literary quality of the material must be up to the best standards of the profession of journalism. The writing must be good, in the particular sense in which each newspaper considers a story well written.

In brief, the material must come to the editorial desk as carefully prepared and as accurately verified as if the editor himself has assigned a special reporter to secure and write the facts.³⁶

This requirement that public relations men know the business of journalism as well as journalists themselves continues to be important, particularly in a campaign. Steinberg notes: "The campaign cannot generate news unless it understands news, and it cannot help journalists cover news unless it knows their needs."³⁷

Steinberg goes on to emphasize the importance of knowing the techniques and requirements of the various media, and the need to impress this importance upon the candidate:

The campaign news director who understands the strengths, weaknesses, preferences, and peculiarities of journalists can best produce news for the deadlines of various media. The news director must persuade the candidate of the overriding importance of news coverage and explain the specific requirements and deadlines of alternative media, individual media outlets and journalists.³⁸

As Arterton notes below, the campaign places heavy emphasis on knowing the techniques and technology of the various media, and where better to get journalistic expertise than from ex-journalists, who often serve as press secretaries:

. . . campaigners understand quite well the way in which journalists perform their job. In fact, of the twelve press secretaries we interviewed,

eight had themselves come into politics from journalism. Campaign expertise in this area abounds, including written manuals on how to secure press coverage. Mostly, these materials describe the organizational demands of the news reporting process--deadlines of different media, the necessity of communication facilities, appropriate camera angles, the need for advance transcripts, and so on. Campaigners can use this information to facilitate (or impede) the flow of information about the campaign.³⁹

Indeed, a campaign will usually go to whatever lengths are necessary to insure that sufficient expertise is on hand to deal with all the media. A good example was the hiring of television specialist Barry Jagoda by the 1976 Carter campaign to insure that that important medium was not slighted:

Jody Powell [Carter's press secretary] brought on Barry Jagoda to help him handle the technical demands of network journalism. Jagoda, who had worked as a producer at both NBC and CBS, described himself as:

somebody who was involved in the decision-making process in television news, as opposed to being a reporter or researcher in television I really understand how the bureaucracy works in television. I understand media politics extremely well; I'm a specialist at it.⁴⁰

The Jagoda example above illustrates adherence not only to the first corollary, but also the second: make the best possible use of all the available media at all the various levels. In short, insure that all the media are well serviced to produce maximum favorable coverage. By hiring Jagoda, the Carter campaign insured that sufficient expertise was on hand in the area of television news and also showed a concern for insuring that all the available media, in this case television, were put to maximum use.

Steinberg describes the importance of this second corollary--the need to use all the media to the fullest extent possible:

Each campaign must appraise the media realistically. . . . [Large] campaigns should emphasize television, but not to the exclusion of the print media. No campaign can afford to alienate media by a snobbish preference for certain types of coverage. News media strategy for any campaign rarely if ever suggests sole reliance on a single medium; each medium must be exploited to the maximum, because each reaches some voters who cannot be reached by other media. Voters receiving the same message from various types of news media will benefit not only from repetition, but from the reinforcement uniquely provided by the media mix.⁴¹

The wise campaign consultant will not use one medium to the exclusion of the rest. In a large campaign, such as a presidential campaign, it is normal to stress television, based on the large audience it reaches. But as noted by Steinberg, above, reliance solely on television is foolish. Ben Wattenberg, Senator Henry Jackson's 1972 adviser, notes another good reason for using all the media--they cue off each other. Specifically, the television reporters can be reached through the print reporters:

When you try to work the press on behalf of a candidate you find that the way to get the video coverage that you want is to get the print coverage you want. In other words, video people take their cue from what the commentators, the reporters, the guys traveling, write--whether Jackson is a conservative or a liberal, whether Humphrey is an old politician or a new politician, whether McGovern is the wave of the future or the wave of the past. It is very difficult to work the TV network guys themselves because so many of the decisions are made by some faceless people up in New York. Whereas you can get Dave Broder by picking up the phone. It's a different process really.⁴²

In making use of all media outlets, Steinberg

recommends that campaigners not write-off the media opposed to a candidate, nor should favoritism be blatantly practiced because it might alienate those who are not recipients of such favoritism:

The campaign should not take friendly media for granted, and it should not write off media committed to the opposition candidate. Publishers, editors, and reporters do not like to be taken for granted; they want to be reminded of their importance. The candidate should usually consolidate support among friendly media before cultivating new media contacts. An important, related factor is the mistake of leaking news stories to uncommitted or hostile media in an effort to change their attitude or neutralize their opposition. This policy of trying to persuade neutral or opposition news media to give fairer coverage or to support the candidate editorially will usually fail to achieve that objective and could also alienate the candidate's original supporters in the news media.

The more prudent (but risky) policy is rewarding friendly news media with occasional favoritism. But the favoritism should not be known or easily confirmed, not should it be blatant.⁴³

Steinberg notes that virtually every media outlet has some value, even in a large campaign. For example, small weeklies may not reach many people, but they are the most susceptible to news releases:

Most weeklies have limited editorial and news staffs; some weeklies have no reporters. Many weeklies either print a news release verbatim or "toss" it. The concise, well-written news release relevant to the weekly's readers has a chance of acceptance⁴⁴

Another important medium not to be overlooked is magazines:

[Large] campaigns should be interested in the impact of favorable or unfavorable magazine coverage, especially in Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News. The political journals of opinion--Human Events, Nation, National Review, New Republic, and so forth--provide valuable coverage for generating volunteer workers and ideological financial support.

Major magazine coverage in personality, non-political articles in large circulation magazines like People or Parade can also be helpful. Magazine articles are also important for two other reasons: (1) they can influence other journalists, and (2) they can be used, in reprint form, to rally support or raise funds.⁴⁵

No media outlet should be ignored, no matter what the medium or what its attitude toward the candidate. Use of a variety of outlets results in a maximum number of voters being reached, perhaps by several different media, and the attention received by the candidate in one medium may create interest in the candidate's campaign on the part of other media.

A final, but important, part of the second corollary is that, not only must all the various types of media outlets be serviced, but also all levels of media must be serviced. In a large, presidential campaign, this specifically means that local and specialized media must not be ignored, despite the obvious importance of the large-circulation (or audience) national media. Consultant Melvyn Bloom notes the importance of local media, particularly in key states:

The candidate and his managers and advisers also pursue what Theodore White calls the "strategically calculated audiences," known in public relations textbooks as "special publics." Every presidential campaign has, for example, selected certain states, strategic because of their electoral votes, to be worked intensively and repeatedly.

In every one of these states, the public relations staff of the candidate must service and cultivate the local media, seeing to it that they treat the arrival of the candidate as a truly major news event. Citizens are aware of his visit throughout the urban and rural circulation area of the

state's larger newspapers and the coverage of the major radio and television stations. If the candidate speaks in Milwaukee, the speech may rate only the briefest treatment in New York media, but in Wisconsin it's front-page material. Thus, a direct impact is made on an important state, and local dignitaries and volunteers have had their enthusiasm aroused so that they might light fires under other potential supporters once the candidate has moved on.⁴⁶

George Bush's 1980 campaign press secretary Peter Teeley verifies the importance placed on local media by a wise candidate:

In some state contests, the local press is more important than the national press We welcome them. Not everybody reads The New York Times or The Washington Post. Papers like The Chicago Sun-Times and The Milwaukee Journal are influential news organizations in their areas. To ignore them or give them short shrift would be a disastrous mistake.⁴⁷

Not only are the local media important in key states, but they are also crucial early in the presidential campaign to a candidate who is little known and has trouble attracting national media. The classic example of successful use of the local media in such a situation is Jimmy Carter's 1976 campaign. Reporter Jules Witcover describes the strategy:

[Jody] Powell [Carter's press secretary] quickly seized upon the importance of local coverage in the Carter kind of campaign. "At that point [Iowa in 1975], the Des Moines Register became more important than The Washington Post," he said later. "The only coverage you get at that stage is local. We might not have known much about anything else, but we did know local media." So while other candidates may have fretted about a lack of national coverage, Powell realized that the large Democratic field in 1975-76 would dilute national coverage for everyone. "Where we were perceptive," he said, "was we knew not only that we couldn't get you [the nation press] but the others couldn't get you either."⁴⁸

The importance of the media, both local and national, in the early stages of the nominating process is discussed at some length in the next chapter. Suffice it for now to say that the local media play a key role throughout the campaign. Even after Carter's 1976 campaign took hold, and he began receiving considerable national media attention, his campaign staff did not ignore the local press, as Jody Powell explains:

In about fifteen or sixteen states, we established local press operations that reported back to the national headquarters and also worked with the state coordinators. It took time to put these local operations into place. In 1975 we would have been dead without the coverage we got from local television stations and local newspapers; and that was true in 1976 as well.⁴⁹

In summary, the wise campaign press staff will keep the second corollary in mind when servicing the media--all media outlets at all levels are significant, and while some may be more important than others, all are worthy of service and cooperation.

The third corollary is very simple: don't overdo it. The press staff should only "push" so far. Don't let service and cooperation become overtly manipulative:

The campaign philosophy should be to exploit every news opportunity without, in effect, "crying wolf too often." If the campaign news director uses all his influence and contacts to push stories of marginal value, what will he do when he has an important story to push? The objective is to exploit the news media without letting journalists feel exploited--that is, to utilize the media without the media feeling "used."⁵⁰

Quality, not quantity, is often more significant in

news coverage, and the press staff should not push too far to obtain coverage unless the event is significant enough to warrant the pushing. As Charles Guggenheim, George McGovern's 1972 media adviser, notes, "I think we have to understand that more [coverage] does not mean better, that more does not mean we're going to win, that more may mean less."⁵¹

This section has examined the long standing public relations concept that service to and cooperation with the media, rather than conflict, will produce the best results. No where is this concept of servicing more in evidence than in the campaign process. The press staff uses a wide variety of informational tools including press releases, audio-visual releases, advance texts, and media kits, to facilitate the servicing process. Also, the press staff keeps three important corollaries of the servicing concept in mind at all times: (1) knowledge of the journalistic process as it applies to the various media is essential, and information supplied must be in the appropriate news style for each medium; (2) make use of all types of media, and at all levels; and (3) don't overdo it in attempting to service the media--a little good coverage of a key campaign event can be more important than a lot of mediocre coverage.

Beyond Service to News Management

Earlier in the chapter, the candidates' belief in the necessity of media manipulation was discussed, yet in the last section, the emphasis was not on manipulation but

on service to and cooperation with the media, albeit for self-serving purposes.

But media servicing, while it is the key underlying public relations concept at work in campaign-press relations, does not adequately explain the extent to which the campaign consultant attempts to influence, or manipulate, media coverage.

The campaign consultant, while always keeping service in mind and insuring that service is what is most evident on the surface, also goes to considerable lengths to influence news content to his candidate's advantage. The dissemination of campaign information, as discussed in the last section, while important in the consultant's effort to gain favorable coverage, is but only a part of the total effort. The consultant further attempts to influence the media by employing three broad tactics: (1) generating favorable coverage via the media event; (2) timing the event for maximum news effect; and (3) controlling media access to maximize favorable coverage and reduce unfavorable coverage.

These three areas will be treated separately in the following subsections.

Generating Favorable Coverage Via the Media Event

What better way is there to get favorable coverage than to generate the news oneself? This is indeed an old public relations ploy, and one which has proved increasingly successful in campaigning. The generating of news is accomplished by staging events which the media will deem

newsworthy and, consequently, which they will cover. The ability of such events to attract media attention is inherent in the nature of news. For news to occur, as noted by Walter Lippmann in 1922, there must be a "manifestation" of events:

It may be the act of going into bankruptcy, it may be a fire, a collision, an assault, a riot, an arrest, a denunciation, the introduction of a bill, a speech, a vote There must be a manifestation. The course of events must assume a certain definable shape, and until it is in a phase where some aspect is an accomplished fact, news does not separate itself from the ocean of possible truth.

. . . In the first instance, therefore, the news is not a mirror of social conditions, but the report of an aspect that has obtruded itself. The news does not tell you how the seed is germinating in the ground, but it may tell you when the first sprout breaks through the surface.⁵²

Lippmann goes on to explain that the press agent understands this need to manifest events, or "arrange a stunt," if he is to get coverage:

The good press agent understands that the virtues of his cause are not news, unless they are such strange virtues that they jut right out of the routine of life. This is not because the newspapers do not like virtue, but because it is not worth while to say that nothing has happened when nobody expected anything to happen. So if the publicity man wishes free publicity he has, speaking quite accurately, to start something. He arranges a stunt: obstructs the traffic, teases the police, somehow manages to entangle his client, or his cause with an event that is already news.⁵³

Edward Bernays shares Lippmann's view of the importance of "starting something." Bernays, writing in 1923, notes that news creation is the most important function of the public relations counsel:

Since news is the newspaper's backbone, it is obvious that an understanding of what news actually

is must be an integral part of the equipment of the public relations counsel. For the public relations counsel must not only supply news [the service concept]--he must create news. This function as the creator of news is even more important than his others.⁵⁴

Hence, a concept of news service is insufficient--news creation is the forte of the successful public relations counsel. Since the time of Lippmann's and Bernay's books, the rise of the mass media and the related rise of the public relations consultant has led to such a flood of "created" events that they compete with one another for attention. In his 1961 book The Image, Daniel Boorstin describes this flood of artificial events, which he calls "pseudo-events":

In a democratic society like ours--and more especially in a highly literate, wealthy, competitive, and technologically advanced society--the people can be flooded by pseudo-events. For us, freedom of speech and of the press and of broadcasting includes freedom to create pseudo-events. Competing politicians, competing newsmen, and competing news media contest in this creation. They vie with one another in offering attractive, "informative" accounts and images of the world. They are free to speculate on the facts, to bring new facts into being, to demand answers to their own contrived questions.⁵⁵

The pseudo-event (also known as the media event because it is staged specifically to attract the media) is now an integral part of campaigning. Boorstin describes the characteristics of the pseudo-event, characteristics which can be found in the majority of campaign events:

- (1) It is not spontaneous, but comes about because someone has planned, planted, or incited it. Typically, it is not a train wreck or an earthquake, but an interview.

- (2) It is planted primarily (not always exclusively) for the immediate purpose of being reported or reproduced. Therefore, its occurrence is arranged for the convenience of the reporting or reproducing media. Its success is measured by how widely it is reported.
- (3) Its relation to the underlying reality of the situation is ambiguous. Its interest arises largely from this very ambiguity. Concerning a pseudo-event the question "What does it mean?" has a new dimension.
- (4) Usually it is intended to be a self-fulfilling prophecy. The hotel's thirtieth-anniversary celebration, by saying that the hotel is a distinguished institution, actually makes it one.⁵⁶

In short, the pseudo-event, hereafter referred to as the media event, is not spontaneous, but contrived for the purpose of attracting favorable media attention. As political scientist Dan Nimmo notes, the political campaign is a prime example of reliance on media events "manufactured by the contenders":

As reported in the news media and experienced by the average citizen, political campaigns are dramatic events, especially when they involve a confrontation of striking personalities or a clash of strongly-held principles. But much of the excitement is less spontaneous than contrived, less real than illusory. Increasingly, the atmosphere that surrounds a political campaign is manufactured by the contenders, a product of the efforts of professional managers to tailor the setting to their candidate's advantage.⁵⁷

The presidential campaign, notes reporter Dom Bonafede, is a prime example of a campaign dominated by media events, as described above by Nimmo:

. . . modern presidential campaigns are centered on "media events." These entail elaborately choreographed presentations, careful planning and strategic scheduling--all intended to draw press attention to the candidate for transmission

to the public. Solely for the benefit of the news media, campaign officials set up "press opportunities" in which reporters can talk with the candidates and photographers can take pictures. "Walking tours" are scheduled during which a candidate visits potential supporters, followed by reporters, photographers and television crews. Brief, informal interviews are arranged between the press and a candidate on the campaign plane or in hotel rooms. Larger, one-on-one interviews are scheduled with particular reporters.⁵⁸

The reason for the extensive use of a wide variety of media events in the campaign is, quite simply, that they generate favorable coverage for the candidate. Nimmo explains:

The purpose of generating pseudo-events in a campaign is obvious--to control the campaign setting by making news flattering to the candidate. The voter senses that the candidate is popular, personable, willing to mingle, and that the campaign has momentum. By winning the battle for friendly exposure, the candidate acquires both a rostrum for his appeals and the attention of the voters he wishes to reach. And exposure, a congenial rostrum, and audience attention are indispensable in contemporary politics.

To achieve its intended purposes a pseudo-event must be believed. It is the function of the campaign specialists to generate that credibility--the public relations personnel, advertising executives, press secretaries, pollsters, and others.⁵⁹

Consultant Steinberg notes that media events should be scheduled to permit the candidate to tie otherwise dull issue statements to a dramatic event, thereby greatly enhancing the impact:

Media-oriented scheduling emphasizes dramatic, photogenic localities--shopping centers, conventions, street rallies, walking tours. Ideally, locations are tied to issues; for example, visiting a drug rehabilitation center and then issuing a statement on drug abuse, or riding a train or subway to discuss transportation problems. When a visual locale is combined with immediacy, the news effects are overpowering.⁶⁰

As noted years earlier by Lippmann and Bernays, the news creators--to be successful--must understand the nature of the news. This holds true today in creating the modern political media event, as Arterton notes:

Beyond technical demands of the news reporting process, the media politics of campaigns involves accommodating to values which journalists bring to campaign reporting: the need to simplify and condense, their preference for the novel or unexpected, the attractiveness of conflict or a dramatic element. . . . Naturally, in seeking to shape news coverage, campaigns conform to these values in staging those events they would like reported.⁶¹

The key to the successful staging of media events, in addition to conforming to journalistic news values, is to carefully plan and prepare them. This key function is partly the responsibility of the campaign advance man. As described by Steinberg, the advance man insures that all arrangements are made for the candidate's future events:

Advance work is the detailed planning, study, and verification of the candidate's travels and movements. The advance man . . . confers personally with everyone involved in the schedule to insure that all arrangements are in order and the event occurs exactly as planned.⁶²

As Joseph Napolitan notes below, advancing is not a new concept. What is a relatively new development, however, is the importance of media advance because of the increasing role played by the media in the campaign (and, consequently, the sharp increase in media events):

The old-style political advance man, whose duties included everything from putting up posters along the candidate's travel route to organizing "spontaneous" demonstrations at his various stops, is being superseded by what we now call media advance. This is a specialized area requiring skills that are, if not more advanced than those of the traditional advance man, certainly different.

As the title implies, the media advance man knows something about the use of media. Often he has had experience in television or radio, sometimes but not always in the news department. . . . The media advance man's primary assignment is milking the maximum amount of media exposure out of a candidate's visit to a certain area.

The theory behind this is simple: more people will see or hear the candidate on television or radio than he can possibly hope to see in person.

. . . If the media advance man does his job well, everyone in the area who watches television, listens to the radio, or reads a newspaper is going to know his candidate has been in town.⁶³

Such advance notice given to the local media will insure maximum coverage of the candidate's media event, be it a speech, rally, parade, et cetera. Another important function of the advance man is to insure that all necessary preparations are made to assist the media traveling with the candidate. As Steinberg notes, this includes providing background material, setting up a press room, and proper "care and feeding" in general:

. . . the advance man should work with the news director to prepare information packets tailored to the drill [the actual event]. These not only include the schedule news release, but basic political, social, and economic data about the area visited. . . . If properly coordinated, this same envelope includes the reporter's room key and other important information, including the traveling press aide's room number. The advance man is responsible for the care and feeding of the traveling press; this includes both room reservations and arranging for a press section or press table at every activity.

The [large] campaign has specific requirements for a working press room. This room requires an adequate supply of typewriters, predominantly manual, plenty of paper, pencils, and at least one long working table. The presidential campaign advance man usually provides for at least three television sets, telephone lines, a special Western⁶⁴ Union hook up, and adequate refreshments. . . .

Such attention to the traveling press not only keeps

them content, but assists them greatly in accomplishing the task of covering the candidate's media events. Hence, the advance man, by alerting the local press and providing adequate facilities for the traveling press assures maximum coverage for the candidate's media events.

Not only must there be adequate press coverage, but obviously, it must be favorable coverage. This is where the more traditional role of the advance man comes into play--he insures that the event is properly arranged and timed, and more importantly, that exactly the right-size crowd is on hand to impress the reporters:

From the standpoint of providing excitement and stirring enthusiasm to impress reporters and provide a good visual, there must be always a "full house." The advance man always gets a room that is barely adequate--that is, slightly too small for the anticipated crowd. If an outdoor area is planned, it must somehow be roped off in such a way as to exaggerate the size of the crowd. Similarly, the advance man provides for an insufficient number of chairs so that some people will stand or chairs will have to be secured at the last minute. In this way, the press will report a "standing-room-only crowd," or "the turnout was much larger than expected, and volunteers were pressed into service to set up more folding chairs." Whether by means of switching banquet tables [from] ten to eight or giving free tickets out at the last minute to deserving volunteers, every activity has a capacity crowd. It must be emphasized that chairs in front rows or at front tables must be 100 percent occupied for appearance, especially for television cameras.⁶⁵

In short, proper planning, staging and crowd turnout, combined with good media turnout, will insure a successful media event. In the quote above, Steinberg emphasizes the importance of the "visual" aspect of the event, and this is because of the importance placed on television coverage.

More than any other development in a long list of media developments during this century, the advent of television has accelerated the use of the political media event. As consultants Baus and Ross explain, the candidate puts top priority on television news coverage of his media events. Such coverage is "the butter on the TV toast":

But on TV, as via the press, the news or feature treatment can pack more wallop than the finest advertisement, since so many have built-in resistance to anything people identify as a paid advertisement fabricated to sell them something. Their guard is down when the message comes across as news or feature material.

The brief flash on the regular news program is the butter on the TV toast. . . . any astute campaign manager would rather see his candidate come on strong with thirty seconds on the evening news than with thirty minutes of canned commercial by federal law branded, "This is a paid political announcement."

The candidate to watch is the one whose manager or whose personal ubiquity can get him on such news flashes by press conferences, performances, dedications, confrontations, getting on a horse at a parade, going from station to station to march on camera at the source, or even issuing a newsworthy statement.⁶⁶

Steinberg discusses the importance of the televised media event, which he calls "visuals," to the larger campaign:

Possible visuals include almost any kind of personal campaigning--at factory gates, a shopping center, public rallies. Strong visuals are preceded by advance work to generate large crowds, including young people, as well as music, balloons, and signs boosting the candidate.

. . . Moreover, the good visual does not sacrifice radio or print media coverage, since it attracts these media also. The visual so dominates the [large] campaigns that the candidate is often scheduled in two or more media markets each day, with one visual per market.⁶⁷

The good "visual," Steinberg adds, must appear

unstructured and spontaneous although, by the very nature of the media event, it is not:

The visual is termed "unstructured" not because it is unorganized or unplanned, but because it is supposed to occur in a natural setting. The more unstructured (i.e., natural) the visual, the more appealing for television, but the greater the logistical problems, and the higher the risk.⁶⁸

The "risk" Steinberg is worried about is, of course, the chance that the candidate might make a mistake for all the television audience to see. Napolitan recommends careful candidate "prepping" to prevent errors during such televised media events:

One way to help candidates look and sound their best in uncontrolled television is to prepare a list of twenty-five to thirty questions they are asked most frequently, define crisp and coherent answers to these questions, and urge the candidates to become so familiar with both that they can snap off the answer whenever the question is posed. This has several advantages. For one thing, it makes the candidate look better if he delivers sharp, concise answers to tough questions. For another, it helps assure that he will give the same answer to the same question whenever it is asked.⁶⁹

In short, the campaign media event, particularly the "visual," requires much hard work by advance men and careful preparation by the candidate to insure an unstructured, natural appearance.

The candidate's reliance on the media event, and more particularly the televised media event, has led to the dominance of television in the presidential campaign process. The televised media event was considered the overwhelmingly dominant feature of the 1976 presidential campaign, as noted by Jules Witcover:

. . . the political strategists had mastered the art of fashioning a campaign to entice television cameras with visual exercises that presented their candidates most advantageously. The television era has brought with it the notion of the "media event"--a staged encounter with a visual gimmick, which cameramen and television reporters could not seem to resist--and by 1976 media events were dominating the candidates' daily schedules. Engineering "free media" became the highest political artform. Getting the candidate on the network evening news was the sine qua non of each day's plan; everything else revolved around that objective.⁷⁰

Some critics, such as correspondent James McCartney, feel that the candidates' desire for television coverage in 1976 was carried to the point where both Ford and Carter ran their campaigns totally as television media events:

What is going on is a fundamental, and observable, change in the way campaigns are run and the way they are covered. What we have witnessed has been the emergence of the dominance of television in presidential campaigning, and its influence on both candidates and journalists. The candidates were trying to cater to what they thought they had to do. And many journalists were confused about what their proper role should be in a campaign so totally dominated by television. The candidates, both Ford and Carter, ran their campaigns almost totally as media events, designed for television, scheduled for television.⁷¹

The obvious emphasis the candidates placed on television in 1976 is easily illustrated. As noted in the example below, the television media event took priority over everything, including direct contact with the voters:

Carter had a busy day of campaigning ahead of him--a 2½ hour flight straight north across the Rockies followed by appearances in Billings, Mont., Bismark, N.D. and Sioux Falls, S.D. But on the way to the [Phoenix] airport he made a detour to the front lawn of a local hospital to deliver a speech on health care.

Only a few hundred people, most of them hospital employees and patients, were present to hear the address, the speech itself was of no particular consequence and Carter had appeared at two public meetings

the prior evening in Phoenix.

Why then did he take an hour from his hectic schedule for such a secondary event? The answer is that the hospital appearance was the day's "morning media event"--a campaign stop specifically designed to enhance the candidate's chances of being seen and heard on the three television networks' national news programs that evening.⁷²

While in 1976 the televised media event was certainly a key tactic in the campaign consultants' efforts to manipulate news coverage, it was not a new tactic. The first campaign to consider the televised media event as the dominant factor in manipulating coverage was probably Richard Nixon's 1968 campaign. Melvyn Bloom, writing shortly after the 1968 campaign, notes Nixon's use of the "pseudo-video-event":

When it came to television, something we might call the pseudo-video-event had become a dominant feature of Nixon's campaign schedule. Since television is the way you get to the most voters, the reasoning went, public events are not held for reasons of content or validity, but mainly to provide television with something to report. Nixon's ideal day always contained such an event. It usually came early, allowing ample time for TV film processing and editing before the six o'clock news. The events themselves and the audiences that turned out for them might be largely irrelevant at times.⁷³

That media manipulation via the media event, usually televised, has become a key tactic for generating favorable news coverage for the candidate is undeniable. The nature and scope of these events ranges from the fairly simple news conference, photo opportunity, or walking tour, to the elaborate parade, rally, or convention.

A few examples will serve to illustrate both the diversity of such events and the elaborate planning and

preparation that goes into them.

The "simple" news conference, for example, is not so simple, as Baus and Ross note:

If a press conference is to be convoked, it should be carefully set up with plenty of room, available telephones and typewriters for reportorial use, wiring facilities for radio and television, coffee and doughnuts to take the edge off the peremptory summons, and a well-coached candidate who has something to say and is ready to say it. Added mileage usually will reward the campaign staff that has prepared written advances if circumstances permit⁷⁴

The meticulous Steinberg adds that, in a large campaign, the portable backdrop should not be forgotten:

. . . the candidate's traveling entourage usually brings a portable backdrop--a cloth, cardboard or heavy paper emblem. The candidate's name should be prominently featured; the campaign logos and colors are usually used.⁷⁵

An innovative twist to the standard news conference was Spiro Agnew's "all-media conferences" during the 1972 campaign. As Timothy Crouse notes, they had the touch of a "connoisseur of TV logistics":

[Vic] Gold [Agnew's press secretary] was the architect of the major innovation in Agnew's 1972 campaigning--the "all-media conference."

. . . . At a press conference, the Vice President stood. At an all-media conference, the Vice President sat down. That was a big joke on the [press] plane for the first week. But the all-media conference was actually a clever device, invented by a connoisseur of TV logistics.

At an all-media conference, Agnew did indeed sit down, with a water pitcher on a little table at his side and a light blue backdrop behind him. The addition of these few props meant the local TV newsmen could shoot the press conference as if it were an exclusive interview in their own studios. Even though a hundred reporters might be present, the TV men could zoom in on the enthroned Veep and capture a feeling of intimacy. . . .

"It was just a little thing," said Jules Witcover, "but it underlined how much the Agnew people thought

about these things. They realized that by accommodating the press, they could have the press do things their way. They saw that one of our⁷⁶ big weaknesses is our desire for convenience."

The above example indicates the extent to which the campaign consultant will go to devise useful techniques to enhance the media event, or even to devise a totally new type of event. One such media event evolved during the 1980 presidential primary campaign. During the Illinois primary a technique known as the "flyaround" became popular as an ideal way to whistlestop through a large primary state, attracting media enroute:

Presidential aspirants eager to "play" well with the voters in this celebrated test-market town [Peoria] have discovered that the best place to campaign is not in town at all--but out at the airport. They will be seen by as many Peorians on television if they stage a brief airport press conference as they would if they take the time to ride around in a motorcade or attend a rally.

Television has become such an essential link between candidates and voters that the "flyaround" from one airport to another has become part of the strategy of the candidates campaigning in this state [Illinois]. The flyaround may be peculiar to Illinois, but especially in the big states where in-person campaigning is inefficient, television in one form or another provides most voters with most of what they know about the candidates.⁷⁷

At the opposite extreme from the almost daily occurrence of such events as the flyaround, press conference, or all-media conference is the campaign special event, such as the rally. In the modern campaign, the rally is a media extravaganza that requires the most comprehensive planning and advance. Steinberg considers such efforts so difficult to plan and execute that a large campaign should have a specialist for such purposes:

The [large] campaign does not plan a rally without a specialist who works alongside the advance man. The rally man is responsible for crowd raising and most of the specifics of what is called the preprogram--that is, the entertainment and festivities scheduled in advance of the candidate's appearance.⁷⁸

The rally man is assisted in his work by referring to the campaign's rally manual:

The rally manual explains the campaign's rally policy and the responsibilities of the rally man, including the campaign's standard operating plan for organizing and promoting rallies. In addition to any chairmen or committees appointed by the advance man (e.g., publicity, invitations, transportation, lodging), the rally man will need committees or task forces on entertainment, promotion, and decorations, as well as another committee for balloons and confetti. The manual should provide detailed instructions on use of balloons, confetti, decorations, signs, banners, bunting, and volunteer groups.⁷⁹

Carter's 29 May 1980 rally in Columbus, Ohio, was a classic example of the staged-for-television rally. Elizabeth Drew described it:

Noon is a good time to get people out for a rally and the Carter campaign has been working on this event for some time; the day is hot and sunny, and a huge crowd has gathered. . . . The plaza is good for giving a picture of a dense crowd, and the tall, modern building [Nationwide Insurance building] in back of it is decorated with bunting and a large American flag. Behind where the President will stand is a large green-and-white sign saying "Support President Carter." The Presidential seal is on the lectern where he will speak. There are five bands here, and their music has been helping to build the crowd's anticipation. An announcer tells the crowd, "Air Force One is safely on the ground, and the Presidential motorcade is on its way right now," and the crowd cheers. The announcer keeps telling the crowd what "an historic occasion" this is. . . . Just as the President arrives, red, white, and blue balloons are released into the air . . . this is obviously an excellent "visual" for tonight's television programs.⁸⁰

And if there are any doubts that television was the

reason for this extravaganza, the comment made after the rally by Carter's campaign manager, Robert Strauss, removes them. Drew reports:

In Columbus, I encountered Strauss, and he said to me of the rally, "That was good, wasn't it? I thought it was important to bring President somewhere nice and safe. No way he wouldn't get a goddam good crowd here today. No way that won't look good tonight. No way they can make a negative out of it. It'll be a positive. It'll look good in New Jersey and California, too. We've got eight [primary] states to look good in tonight. He'll look much better than the boy [Kennedy]. Did you see the boy on TV this morning? He looked bad--tired."⁸¹

The only campaign special event more complex, and even more television-oriented, than a major rally are the nominating conventions. As Timothy Crouse notes in his description of the 1972 Democratic Convention, they are the "greatest media events on earth":

The conventions, however, were the greatest media events on earth. The Convention Hall was the world's biggest TV studio, lit for TV with rows and rows of hard white spotlights, wired for TV with 150 miles of electric cable, and with almost every public event staged expressly for TV. The networks dominated the Conventions by sheer numbers. CBS had a staff of 500; NBC and ABC had 450 each.⁸²

In summary, the concept of creating news by causing a manifestation of events, thereby attracting the media's attention, is an old publicity axiom much improved upon and refined by the modern public relations counselor. In the area of politics, the campaign consultant applies this concept to create a multitude of media events, all of which are intended to generate favorable news coverage for the candidate. Media events have proliferated in the presidential campaign, particularly since the advent of television. Today,

generating the televised media event is one of the primary concerns of the campaign consultant.

One further point needs to be addressed concerning media events. Assuming they are mostly vacuous, if not deliberately misleading or false, then who is most to blame for their proliferation? The campaigners who generate them to gain favorable coverage, or the media, particularly television, who never fail to cover them? This paper, by listing the media event as a technique of media manipulation, might indicate that the consultant is to blame. On the other hand, as McGovern's 1972 campaign manager (now Senator) Gary Hart explains, the media might be to blame. Commentator and critic Edwin Diamond quotes Hart:

"If you want to give a traditional speech" instead of a media event, says Gary Hart, "they'll ask you if it's worth turning the cameras on." During his Colorado Senate race, when Hart planned to make policy statements about water pollution or the need for housing, he knew he would get very little attention if he invited reporters to chat with him in his office. So, like candidates everywhere, he walked along riverbanks and visited housing sites to make his points. When a candidate issues a twenty-page "position paper" on "American Schools and Basic Educational Values" . . . , it is considered a "room emptier," worth fifteen seconds on the evening news or four paragraphs in the back of the paper. For real media attention, he has learned that he must go to the front steps of South Boston High as classes are dismissed and say something "punchy."⁸³

More often than not, who is to blame in perpetuating the stream of media events is a function of what side of the relationship one is on. Politicians and consultants, such as Hart, tend to blame the media, while the media claim they are being manipulated by clever public relations

consultants. What is most likely the case, harking back to the symbiotic nature of the press-candidate relationship, is that both sides are to blame for media events. British journalist John Midgley aptly calls the process "reciprocal manipulation":

Manipulation of the press by the personages, and of personages by the press, is something . . . that is hopeless to expect to avoid entirely. A reciprocal manipulation is, indeed, implicit in the whole idea of a "media event"--Reagan throwing a snowball in New Hampshire, say, or William Colby pulling out a poison pistol for Senator Frank Church and Senator Barry Goldwater to handle--since press and personages are each acting expressly to meet the other's needs.⁸⁴

Nowhere is reciprocal manipulation more evident than in the televised media event. As Dan Nimmo notes, the politicians' and the networks' interests "dovetail":

The conventions of television journalism make it relatively easy for public relations personnel to contrive pseudo events for television reporters. Competition on the television news beat finds each station striving to attract a large audience with interesting and entertaining stories; television's appetite for such news dovetails well with the candidate's thirst for image exposure.⁸⁵

There are any number of examples showing how journalistic interests dovetail with the candidates' interests, resulting in a successful media event that makes both parties happy. James Perry supplies an excellent example of a mutually satisfactory media event from vice presidential candidate Walter Mondale's 1976 campaign:

An advance man devised an extraordinary media event involving CB radios and conversations between "Minnesota Fritz" Mondale and various truck drivers with names like Possum Belly and Tail-gunner.

The wire pool car--the one carrying reporters from AP and UPI--installed its own CB radio and it was operated by the driver, who CBs under the name

of Pittsburgh Steely. At one point, at the request of AP and UPI, he picked up his radio and asked "Minnesota Fritz" a question.

That simply outraged the TV reporters. "Damn," said one correspondent. "They [AP and UPI] are turning this into a media event!"

The motorcade continued on to the biggest truck stop I have ever seen, where Mondale talked to more truckers and actually climbed into the cab of W. T. Hayes's big Kenworth. The cameras went wild.⁸⁶

One more example, albeit more prosaic, comes from John Anderson's 1980 campaign, as cited by Dom Bonafede:

Sometimes the media and a candidate use each other for their mutual advantage. [Richard] Stout [Anderson's communications director] reported, for example, that on the day of the Illinois primary, a representative of one of the television networks called Anderson's headquarters to complain that the candidate was scheduled to vote too late in the afternoon to get on the evening news. "Consequently, the time had to be changed about three times in order to get something visual early enough to send to New York," Stout said.⁸⁷

What is perhaps more remarkable about the above example than the mutual manipulation is the fact that such a scheduling "error" had occurred in the first place.

Many critics have complained that the rash of media events have led to an excessive emphasis on campaign "trivia" and "horserace" reporting. This criticism will be examined in the next chapter.

In summary, the media event has blossomed to the mutual satisfaction of both the media and the candidate. Consequently, generating favorable news via the media event is a key technique used by the consultant. But merely generating favorable news is insufficient of itself to insure maximum favorable coverage. The news must also be generated in the right amount, at the right time, consistently throughout the campaign.

Timing the Events for Maximum Effect

Generating the media event requires careful planning, advance work, and execution. These factors alone, however, do not insure that maximum coverage is obtained or that the correct audience is reached. Furthermore, too many media events might swamp the press as well as tire out the candidate who has to race around staging all of them.

The key to success is to have the right amount of media events, staged at the right time, and for the right audience. This is accomplished in the campaign by adroit scheduling, proper campaign pacing, and successful orchestration of individual events.

In a large campaign, a group of consultants is specifically and solely concerned with scheduling the campaign. Scheduling, as defined by Steinberg, is "the unified process of structuring, administering, planning and implementing the allocation of the candidate's time."⁸⁸ In a major campaign, scheduling of the candidate's time is specifically oriented toward gaining maximum media coverage:

Media orientation is the degree to which the schedule is oriented to produce news coverage. The local campaign that generates little news coverage is primarily or solely person oriented; the major campaign that makes news and has traveling media reaches its much larger constituency through the media via scheduling. The number of persons reached directly by scheduling is statistically insignificant; the number of persons reached indirectly by the news generated by scheduling is statistically significant. The schedule is media oriented in two ways. First, it includes items that are newsworthy and emphasizes locations and times of day most conducive to news coverage. Second it includes such items that are directly media oriented as interviews, editorial and other meetings with journalists, news conferences, tapings, and so forth.⁸⁹

Hence, the schedule is based primarily on media considerations. As Arterton notes, this includes the overall scheduling strategy, as well as day-to-day plans:

Anticipating the reactions of journalists, campaign decision-makers set their strategic plans and their daily behavior with a view toward how the press will report campaign events.

. . . On a superficial level, the building of campaign behavior around media considerations involves actions such as scheduling the campaign day so that events to be covered take place before deadlines; allowing a break in the scheduling for filing stories; . . . passing out schedules, advance texts of the candidate's major speeches, and other news releases containing reportable information; arranging private interviews with the candidate, family members, and staff personnel; and so on. In terms of organizational resources and candidate time, interactions with journalists comprise a substantial commitment of campaign effort. Much of what a presidential candidate organization actually does is related to its relations with the press, particularly those journalists who are assigned to travel with the candidate.⁹⁰

In short, what a presidential candidate does is carefully scheduled on a day-to-day basis to insure not only that media events are held, but held at the proper place and time.

Once the daily schedule is set, the consultant insures that a comprehensive, accurate schedule handout is reproduced for the media. As Steinberg notes, the quality of the schedule reflects on the campaign:

The schedule, and the efficiency and timeliness with which it is produced and distributed, projects the campaign image to the news media. It should be intensive, helpful, and thorough. Its substantive content--that is, the number and quality of events on the schedule--should indicate that the campaign is viable, serious, and has momentum. . . . Any schedule, to the extent that it makes a journalist's job easier by indicating what is and will be happening, affects the editor or reporter's attitude; similarly, the efficient schedule, which projects well both because it shows the candidate

busy and because it provides prompt and complete information to the journalist, affects the recipient's perception of the campaign and therefore affects reporting.⁹¹

An important consideration in campaign scheduling is pacing. By adroit use of the mass media, the campaign consultant can impart a sense of momentum to the campaign by building-up the events. Stanley Kelley describes Whitaker and Baxter's ability to pace:

In their development of political issues, Whitaker and Baxter are further concerned with proper "pacing." To pace a campaign means to adjust the emotional tone of arguments and the volume of propaganda according to considerations of timing. Pacing can give a campaign the appearance of "movement" and "build-up." . . . The mass media destroy geographic distance and allow the propagandist to give an over-all unity to his efforts. He can conduct his campaign so that it will build steadily in intensity and arouse maximum interest and excitement just before election. He can save his clinching statements until the last; not to do so may be to lose votes to counter-propaganda or to boredom.⁹²

Steinberg also stresses the importance of pacing, saying that proper pacing must create "momentum" and allow a proper issue "mix":

Pacing the campaign requires planning and controlling both the overall news exposure of the candidate--in terms of his statements, news conferences, interviews, and media-oriented schedule--and the number of news exposures in print or electronic media on particular subjects or issues. The first concerns momentum; the second concerns the issue mix. Proper pacing . . . prevents the campaign from peaking too soon, yet guarantees the campaign maximizes early publicity. Specific pacing controls the frequency of the candidate's visits to particular regions of the country Two visits to the same area in a short period may compromise the publicity value of both visits; hence, pacing visits requires coordination with scheduling.⁹³

Hence, good scheduling reflects pacing. A well-paced

campaign has the candidate speaking about the "right" subjects at the "right" time and place. Such a properly paced campaign imparts a sense of momentum to the observing media. Proper pacing also insures that the campaign news, as generated by press releases and media events, is doled out at the proper rate. Timothy Crouse discusses Nixon's press operation and its ability to "feed" the news at a "proper, digestible rate":

The White House press operation was manipulative, frustrating, and sometimes downright evil; but it was always professional. From Nixon on down, the people in the White House knew the art of feeding news to the press at a proper, digestible rate, doling out just the right amount at the right time.⁹⁴

Hence, not only must the overall campaign be paced, but the campaign news must also be paced as well to insure maximum coverage. Steinberg calls this pacing of news "orchestrating," and if there is anything that demands proper orchestration, it is the "major stories" of the campaign:

The news media strategy calls for clear delineation of important news stories. These major stories, varying from an important speech, issue position, dramatic proposal, or attention-getting endorsement, are planned in advance Orchestrating major stories means making certain they receive the substantial publicity the campaign desires--that is releasing the news when and where the campaign wants.

Orchestrating major news stories mean releasing them during slow periods, or at least not at times when the news is dominated by other events. Sometimes the campaign cannot control circumstances, as when major nonpolitical occurrences happen without warning and obscure political news. More often the campaign can control the tempo of its news, and it can call attention to a major story by not releasing competitive stories during the same day or time period. . . . Similarly, releasing a major story . . . must be consistent with media deadlines.⁹⁵

An example of how not to pace, or "orchestrate," the news is supplied by Timothy Crouse's description of George McGovern's 1972 campaign:

Mankiewicz [McGovern's media consultant] claimed to have answered 10,000 questions in the course of the campaign, only seven of them about a real issue. This was a valid point, but the reporters had a valid problem: they were swamped with prepared texts, but McGovern did not deliver many of these speeches. On a typical day, the press would receive a statement on anti-trust policy and another on veterans, both of them provocative treatises by McGovern's most eloquent speech writers. But then McGovern would scrap both statements in favor of a new blast at the [Nixon] Administration over the Watergate affair, and the reporters would have to devote all of their space to the Watergate speech. This frustrated the good reporters, but there was nothing they could do about it. The Nixon people would have carefully scheduled the statements so that each one received maximum coverage.⁹⁶

There are numerous specific tactics the campaign consultant can use to orchestrate the campaign's media events for maximum publicity. Most of these tactics draw upon the consultant's knowledge of media technology and methods of operation. For example, as consultant Paul Theis recommends, campaign photographs can be saved for release on news "dog days":

Don't wait for events to just happen. Stage activities for news photo coverage--especially pictures the staff [photographer] can shoot and the public relations director release during the "dog days" to keep the candidate's name and picture before the voters.⁹⁷

Weekends are traditionally such news "dog days," and Steinberg recommends that the consultant make use of weekend publicity opportunities:

Programs that are taped or aired on weekends should provide additional publicity opportunities,

because weekends are slow news days. The aggressive news director should insure that all media are aware of the candidate's weekend schedule, so their crews can interview the candidate at the entrance of the station, before or after the program. The host station will probably "lift" a portion of the program for the evening news, which has much higher ratings than the public affairs program; rival stations will use their own brief interview--done just before or after the program. Monday morning newspapers, which have a scarcity of news, may give the candidate more coverage than the typical weekday edition.⁹⁸

Not only does the wise campaign consultant schedule media events for the "slow" days, but he also is careful to keep in mind the daily filing deadlines of the media when orchestrating events. For example, Steinberg makes the point of noting that news conferences should be scheduled early, keeping afternoon papers' filing deadlines in mind:

The general rule is that the news conference should be scheduled early in the day. This permits the candidate's opening statement and responses to questions to be carried in afternoon newspapers and to be disseminated through wire and news services early enough that many newspaper and radio stations can carry the story. Stories that are carried early in the day on radio may well be carried throughout the day; in contrast, the campaign story that is carried later in the day is aired that many fewer times.⁹⁹

The deadline most often kept in mind by the consultant when orchestrating an event is the Eastern Standard Time deadlines of the three major networks' evening news programs. As Frank Mankiewicz notes:

. . . any politician in California who wants to make national news will hold his press conference, drive his electric car or deliver his discourse on planetary realism before noon. If he waits, he will miss deadlines for the Evening News.¹⁰⁰

The networks' television news deadlines are becoming more flexible, thanks to technological innovations--

specifically, the development of electronic news gathering.

Television journalist Elmer Lower interviewed ABC news director Stanford Opatowsky concerning the impact of the new technology:

Film is outmoded The lightweight minicams, all electronic, are the only means we have to keep up with candidates who speak on the east coast in the morning, make five or six jet stops during the day and bed down at night on the Pacific Coast

First, candidates learned that they had to say something important by 3 p.m. [EST] if they wanted to make the evening news broadcasts. . . . But in 1980 they have had to adapt their schedules to electronic coverage. ENG [electronic news gathering] has no film to develop. It can be edited quickly and fed from almost anywhere. The telephone company has feed points in some of the strangest places imaginable. So we can cover much later, in some cases right up to air time.¹⁰¹

While such new technological developments in television news gathering give the campaign consultant much more flexibility in orchestrating media events for television, the consultant will nevertheless give the television reporters and cameramen sufficient leeway to get their footage back to New York.

Examples of successful orchestration abound. As already noted by Crouse, Nixon and his staff were masters at "feeding the news." Jimmy Carter is another master at orchestration. The following example is lengthy, but it is an excellent example of Carter orchestration in the 1976 primaries. Carter, using scheduling and political connections, got the national media to focus attention on his Ohio primary win (and to downplay losses in same-day primaries in New Jersey and California). Arterton describes

what occurred:

One aspect of their strategy was to use Carter's traveling plans to highlight the significance of Ohio. During the last two weeks of campaigning, Carter spent two days campaigning in California, made appearances in New Jersey on four days, and was in Ohio on seven days. To highlight the eastern primary even further, the campaign cancelled a final trip to California and the whole day was given over to campaigning in Ohio, with a late evening appearance in New Jersey As Jon [sic] Margolis of the Chicago Tribune had noted in an earlier piece, the effect of these Carter last minute travels was to draw attention to the states in which he campaigned. Thus during the week before the last three primaries, most analyses were describing Ohio as the critical battle ground.

In case anyone missed the point, however, Carter provided an illustration of how [another] resource--growing influence over other important actors in nomination politics--could be used to shape press commentary. The day of the three primaries, Carter called Mayor Daley of Chicago, who controlled eighty-six delegates nominally pledged to Illinois Senator Stevenson. In Marathon Witcover describes the call as follows:

Carter laid it out cold: he was going to lose in California and New Jersey, but would win in Ohio. . . . Daley took this prediction and used it in a way that it would all but force an interpretation that what happened in Ohio was the important thing: that California and New Jersey were side shows.

Daley held a press conference in which he said of Carter, "if he wins in Ohio, he'll walk in under his own power . . ." When asked how Ohio became the critical primary on June 8, Pat Caddell [Carter's pollster and adviser] recalled:

We orchestrated that. We were in trouble in New Jersey but we knew we were going to win in Ohio. Then Daley did it. Of course, we orchestrated that too! Jimmy called Daley and said, "We're going to lose New Jersey, but we'll win in Ohio."¹⁰²

As evidenced by the above example, orchestration can be a complicated, but highly rewarding, technique. A final point should be made in the area of scheduling, pacing and

orchestration of media events: the media must be monitored by the campaign consultants to appraise the campaign's success at media manipulation. Steinberg describes the process:

The campaign must continually monitor print and broadcast media coverage to evaluate both quantity and quality. Typical questions might include: Is there enough television coverage? What about coverage in specific television media markets? Does the television coverage reflect the campaign's emphasis on particular issues? How much radio news is the campaign securing? . . .

The news operation should subscribe to or purchase important newspapers, magazines, or other publications. . . . The news director needs to be aware of any stories or developments on the campaign, candidate, opponent, or on other issues since the candidate or spokesperson may be asked to comment on any of these. Monitoring also gives the news director a feel for how the news media is [sic] treating various news stories¹⁰³

Media monitoring not only keeps the campaign abreast of the success or failure of their attempts at orchestration, but it also allows for reaction, through advertising or the candidate's public statements, to critical comments by opposing candidates or unfriendly media. Political advertiser Tony Schwartz calls this a "task-oriented" approach to media use:

The task-oriented use of electronic media enables the candidate to deal with campaign problems on a fire-fighting or guerilla warfare basis--to tune media to needs The long range program campaign cannot deal with these specific problems that arise on a day-to-day basis. A task-oriented campaign can create, overnight, a commercial that relates to a problem that has just arisen.¹⁰⁴

Joseph Napolitan shares Schwartz' belief in the need for quick reaction (in other words, quickly orchestrating new events) to capitalize on good events or to attack opponents.

Napolitan recommends that each campaign staff include an "instant-reaction team":

. . . I would establish an "instant-reaction" electronics team, a group of television and radio specialists who could virtually instantaneously [sic] capitalize on an event, a statement, a speech, a piece of news, and through electric feeds make this available to the networks and key stations throughout the country. Often these could be news material offered to the stations for use on the news programs; in other cases they would be paid spots, produced in twenty-four hours or less and worked into previously purchased time.

No one knows when news that could affect the outcome of the election will break, or even when an opponent will commit a gaffe that could be capitalized on.¹⁰⁵

Monitoring and reaction go hand-in-hand as part of the overall concept of orchestrating media events for the benefit of the candidate. Elizabeth Drew describes President Carter's "reaction committee," formed for just such orchestration purposes during the 1980 campaign:

There was also established within the White House a group called the "reaction committee," which met every afternoon to decide whether and how to rebut whatever charges [Edward] Kennedy was making. The group would consider such questions as who should make the response--the Vice-President, the First Lady, Powell [Carter's press secretary], a Cabinet officer--and in what forum. Richard Moe, the Vice President's chief of staff, was put in charge of the group, and among its members were David Rubenstein, deputy to Stuart Eizenstat, who is assistant to the President for domestic affairs and policy; Rex Granum, deputy press secretary; Gail Harrison, assistant to the Vice-President for domestic policy; Bert Carp, also of Eizenstat's staff; and Martin Franks, who is in charge of research for the Carter/Mondale Presidential Committee.¹⁰⁶

In summary, it is not sufficient for the campaign consultant to merely generate favorable news via a wide variety of media events. The consultant must also maximize the

coverage of these events by careful campaign scheduling, by pacing the campaign to maintain momentum, and by pacing (orchestrating) the campaign's news. Finally, the media must be continually monitored to evaluate the news coverage the campaign is receiving and to give the campaign reaction-team the earliest possible notice of events that require the candidate to respond in some manner.

The third broad tactic employed by the consultant to manipulate the media is to minimize the amount of unfavorable news generated by the campaign. This is accomplished by controlling the media's access to the candidate and his campaign staff.

Controlling Access to Influence Media Coverage

The successful campaign consultant is the one who can generate the most favorable news about his candidate through a series of properly scheduled, orchestrated media events. But the effort to manipulate coverage does not stop there. The consultant must also avoid damaging coverage. There are certainly sources of damaging news outside the campaign over which the consultant has no control. At best, he can actively monitor the media and quickly react with counter advertising or statements, as discussed in the last section.

But not all damaging news originates outside the campaign. All too often, the campaign can create its own "bad press." A good consultant will reduce the chances of this occurring by controlling the media's access to the

sources of such damaging news--the candidate and the campaign staff. The consultant is able to do this based on the simple fact that the candidate, not the press, controls where he and his staff go and what they do. By adroit scheduling, the consultant is able to control press access to the candidate. As Steinberg notes, the candidate's schedule may be media-oriented, but it is certainly not media controlled--it centers, instead, around the strengths of the candidate:

The common denominator of any schedule entry is that it revolves around the candidate. The schedule reflects his strengths and accentuates his positive qualities. The schedule deemphasizes events in which he does poorly, even if that means deemphasizing news conferences or visuals, although the campaign's media orientation will be severely compromised.¹⁰⁷

In essence, the candidate is scheduled for those types of media events in which he best performs. The press is encouraged to cover these events, and discouraged, or even prevented, from covering events that are not the forte of the candidate, but which might nevertheless be necessary for various political reasons.

The consultant's ability to limit media access is dependent upon the balance of power in the symbiotic relationship, as discussed in Chapter I. During the early stages of the campaign, a candidate desperate for coverage may be in no position to control access, since he is in need of all the press attention he can get, whenever he can get it. This certainly does not remain the case in the latter stages of the campaign, however, when the candidate has a considerable

media following. In short, as Arterton notes, "political success" provides the candidate with "leverage" to control the press:

Considerations of the power aspects of the relationship between press and politicians do not suppose . . . that campaigners can force journalists to write particular stories. Rather than attempting to influence directly the news product, campaigners search for circumstances in which they can narrow the range of available stories and interpretations, without incurring the costs of journalists' ire that might accompany overt penetration of the news reporting process. Candidates and their advisors are, for example, very aware of the consequences of political success for developing leverage over those journalists assigned to them.¹⁰⁸

Indeed, with political success comes the "leverage" that allows the consultant to increasingly restrict the growing number of requests for access to the candidate and key staff. The simple fact of growth in a successful campaign, coupled with increasing media requests for access, works to limit access:

As the campaign succeeds in developing political support, volunteers and staff are recruited at the national office and in the separate state-level branches. Gradually responsibilities are delegated to an expanding staff, and authority becomes increasingly stratified. At the same time, growing political support results in an increasing number of demands for access to the candidate and his upper level staff by both politicians and journalists. . . . As a consequence of this rapid growth, the decision-making circles of the campaign become progressively more insulated and difficult to reach.¹⁰⁹

Using the Carter 1976 campaign as a classic example, Arterton describes how increasing political success allowed Carter's press secretary, Jody Powell, to consider only the "best" requests for access to the candidate:

At the same time, these early political successes were followed by a gradual growth in the

press corps traveling with the candidate. Not only does that mean that each campaign event will receive greater coverage, but also that newsmen will compete on a continuing basis with each other for the limited amount of private interview time with the candidate and his top level staff. In the fall, a casual conversation with Jody Powell could produce a half-hour car ride with Carter; increasingly, after New Hampshire written requests for interviews were required:

At that point, it was not a matter of begging for additional coverage, it was trying to sort out the opportunities that you had and taking advantage of them, of the best one.

Competition for access among the journalists assigned to cover Carter meant the campaign staff could establish and implement their priorities for allocating the candidate's time so as to maximize different varieties of news coverage.¹¹⁰

As the campaign gains momentum and political success, the consultant, by controlling the candidate's schedule, is increasingly able to restrict media access to the candidate to those times and places best suitable for favorable coverage. Events which might produce unfavorable news are increasingly avoided, and the press is restricted from covering them. This development of momentum and political success is examined in more detail in the next chapter. Suffice it to say now that such success permits the consultant to greatly strengthen his control over media access.

There is one type of candidate, however, who to a large degree starts out the campaign in an already strong position of control over media access--the incumbent. The incumbent is already in possession of certain advantages that, as Steinberg notes, should be used to full advantage:

Any incumbent who does not fully exploit the publicity value of the office makes the reelection

task more difficult. Incumbency has disadvantages, including having a record that can be attacked. Hence, its primary advantages--power legitimacy, government perquisites--should be utilized, especially to generate publicity related to the incumbent's official responsibilities, rather than his reelection campaign.¹¹¹

Press critic Ben Bagdikian agrees with Steinberg that the publicity value of the office is a key advantage, particularly for a president:

The President can preempt prime time on broadcasting networks almost any time he wants, and almost simultaneously does so with front pages of all the papers. It is the most awesome, untrammelled communications power exercised by any leader in history.¹¹²

Wherever the President goes, he is guaranteed substantial coverage, and as Elizabeth Drew notes, the splendor of a campaigning president cannot be rivaled by the competition, nor can the staff capabilities:

There is quite a difference between a President's campaign and anyone else's. Air Force One is an impressive-looking plane. The President's motorcade is very large, as is his staff contingent--even when, for budget reasons, it is being held down. The Presidential seal is on each lectern where he speaks. The logistics are smooth, and transcripts of the President's public utterances are produced in no time.¹¹³

Because of the already existing demand for coverage of a presidential candidate, the incumbent president can control access as no other candidate can. Consequently, the wise president seeking reelection will limit his media contacts to those of his own choosing. In the 1976 campaign, incumbent Gerald Ford pursued such a strategy in the general election campaign period. Jules Witcover quotes from campaign manager Stuart Spencer's strategy memorandum:

"There is no question that people who actually see the President are influenced by that event, and local press has its beneficial impact. However, for the general election, presidential-campaign events are not significant in terms of their impact on the people who attend. These people are mainly important as backdrops for the television viewer. During the general election, all presidential travel must be planned for its impact on those who learn it through the media."

To this end, the blueprint [memorandum] said in another page . . . , it was important to "carefully plan, prepare, and execute all on-camera appearances. The President should be seen on television as in control, decisive, open, and candid"114

Robert Teeter, Ford's pollster in 1976, describes the success of this strategy of tightly controlling media access to Ford, a strategy which quickly became known as the Rose Garden Strategy. The strategy capitalized on the strengths inherent in incumbency, and downplayed Ford's weaknesses as a campaigner (thereby adhering to what Steinberg said at the beginning of this section--the schedule reflects the candidate's strengths and downplays his weaknesses):

We had found in the primaries that when the president campaigned regularly, he was not effective. When he went out on the stump, his inexperience as a campaigner showed up. Throughout a day of five or six speeches, he would tend to get more strident and more partisan and harder on the attack; and when people began to see him this way on the evening news every night, his national approval ratings tapered off. Then when he'd stay in the White House for three or four months, he'd come back a little bit in the national polling. Of course, his campaigning would help him in the immediate areas that he was going through, but the general effect of it was negative. So this was the basis for the campaign strategy in the general election, the Rose Garden strategy. The president simply did better in communicating with the voters when he was perceived as the president, not as a candidate for president. I think that any president would probably do better as president than as a candidate, but it had to be doubly or triply true with President Ford because he's a very, very poor stump speaker.115

And so, the wise candidate, particularly one who is a weak campaigner, will carefully restrict media access to those times and places of his choosing, as Ford did in the 1976 campaign. The true master of media manipulation via controlled access was, of course, Richard Nixon. Jules Witcover wrote after the 1972 election:

I am not going to insult your intelligence tonight or impose upon your time by rehashing the issues of the campaign or making any last-minute charges against our opponents. You know what the issues are. . . .

-President Nixon,
election eve telecast
from San Clemente,
Nov. 6, 1972.

With the above statement, Richard M. Nixon concluded the slickest noncampaign for reelection in America presidential history. Supremely confident in the polls' findings that he was on the verge of a landslide victory over Democratic nominee George McGovern, the President ran almost exclusively from the Oval Office of the White House. It was not simply on election eve that he declined to insult the intelligence of the voters or impose upon their time by rehashing the issues; he exercised the same deference throughout the campaign. 116

As correspondent John Midgley notes, Nixon's media strategy during his first term in office--a strategy he continued during the election period--was that of bypassing the media almost entirely, going directly to the voters via controlled statements on radio and television:

. . . Richard Nixon devised a policy to by-pass the reporters, holding fewer normal press conferences than his predecessors and instead using radio and television to communicate directly with the public on all kinds of occasions without journalistic intermediaries. 117

The Nixon example shows just how imbalanced the symbiotic relationship can become. Nixon's "by-pass"

technique was one he developed in his successful 1968 campaign, as Timothy Crouse notes:

Richard Nixon learned a lot about the press from the 1968 campaign, far more than the press learned about him. . . . He found out how to undermine reporters in subtle ways. He discovered that he could be an effective performer on TV, and that he could use television to get around the press. The main lesson he took from the campaign was that he could isolate himself from the press with no dire consequences to his political well-being; he could refuse to come to terms with the major issue of the day [Vietnam] for nine straight months without risking a mutiny from the press.¹¹⁸

Nixon, in his 1968 return to politics after his defeats in 1960 and 1962, devised a strategy whereby he would appeal to the voters through the controlled use of television, bypassing the public media. Joe McGinniss, of Nixon's 1968 staff, describes this strategy:

He [Nixon] would return with a fresh perspective, a more unselfish urgency.

His problem was how to let the nation know. He could not do it through the press. He knew what to expect from them, which was the same he had always gotten. He would have to circumvent them. Distract them with coffee and doughnuts and smiles from his staff and tell his story another way.

Television was the only answer. . . . But not just any kind of television. An uncommitted camera could do irreparable harm. His television would have to be controlled. He would need experts. They would have to find the proper settings for him, or if they could not be found, manufacture them.¹¹⁹

Nixon's 1968 strategy of isolation from his traveling press was coupled with an efficient staff who cared for the "creature comforts" of the press at the same time that they isolated them, as Dan Nimmo explains:

Richard Nixon's managers in 1968 courted the working press assiduously by caring for reporters' creature comforts with hotel

accommodations, yacht trips, water-skiing, limousine transportation, and endless rounds of cocktail parties. Nixon himself, however, remained aloof and granted only brief interviews as he stepped from his airplane, limousine, or hotel. By holding the press at arm's length Nixon's managers sought to convey the image of a calm, efficient, deliberate, and cautious approach to the crises of the times.¹²⁰

It was only natural that Nixon continue such a successful policy of restricted media access during his first term of office and in his 1972 campaign, which, if anything, was more restrictive than in 1968 thanks to the added advantages of incumbency. This resulted in, as Jules Witcover noted earlier, a "non-campaign." The success of this media by-pass strategy in 1972 is evident in the detrimental effect it had on the opponent's campaign, as noted by reporter James Dickenson:

When a candidate makes only one or two closely controlled appearances in a day, as Nixon did in Atlanta and New York late in the campaign, the press hasn't much choice in what to play. When his opponent has several events, however, some may be good, some bad, and the press may choose a bad one. McGovern complained of this in 1972 as did Hubert Humphrey in 1968.¹²¹

Correspondent David Broder gave grudging acknowledgement at a conference after the election to Nixon's ability to control access during the 1972 campaign:

But of all the disparities between the campaigns that have been mentioned here, I would guess that the most consequential, in terms of the outcome, was the disparity in access to the two candidates. I complement you [Nixon staff], from your point of view, on the degree of control that you maintained over access to the President. In effect, the only things that we were able to report about

the President's campaign were those things which he selected to make available for reporting.¹²²

The candidate who can best control media access, limiting it to those events which provide the best possibilities for favorable coverage, has a significant edge on his opponents. Another important factor in controlling access involves controlling what the campaign staff tells the media. After the candidate himself, the most damaging source of news adverse to the campaign is often the staff. Reporter and consultant Jeff Greenfield learned this early in his career:

I've also learned that a good reporter will always look for the feuds that infest every campaign. My first experience with a political journalist came in the 1968 Kennedy campaign when columnist Robert Novak introduced himself to me by saying, "The people back in Washington say you have absolutely no impact on policy, and that all you do is to write some words to put icing on the cake." Now, innocent that I was, I did sense that this was a leading question--an opening for me to launch into a diatribe against the New Frontier liberals who had started the Vietnam war and led our country through the gates of hell. What I did was to shrug and mutter something banal. I have kept to that practice ever since (not banality, but the refusal to discuss internecine fights). Of course, such feuds make good reading, and I understand full well why a reporter wants to find these things out. I assume reporters understand why I have no interest in helping them.¹²³

All too often, however, the campaign staff do "help" the campaign reporters by revealing the campaign's dirty laundry, as witnessed by this exchange between McGovern's campaign manager Gary Hart and reporter James Perry at a conference after the 1972 election:

HART: I'd like to ask the reporters their opinions on whether the McGovern Campaign was too open. Were we too available?

PERRY: It was the most garrulous staff that I've ever seen--they lined up to talk to you.

HART: I guess that answers my question. Wait until next time.¹²⁴

Timothy Crouse verifies the damage done by the McGovern staff to its own campaign:

It is one thing for a candidate to see the press frequently and answer their questions honestly, which McGovern tried to do. . . . However, it is another thing for a campaign staff to talk openly about its problems, feuds, and discontents. That is the political equivalent of indecent exposure, and the McGovern staffers indulged in it with a relish that bordered on wantonness. While the Nixon people, by keeping their mouths tightly shut, managed to keep the lid on the largest political scandal in American history [Watergate], the McGovern people, by blabbing, succeeded in making their campaign look hopelessly disorganized and irresponsible.¹²⁵

The difference in philosophies concerning staff control between the 1972 Nixon and McGovern campaigns is evidenced by this statement from Jeb Magruder, chairman of the Committee to Reelect the President [Nixon]:

The Nixon campaign certainly always had a relatively controlled press policy. We [the staff] always were accessible in campaign headquarters, but under controlled conditions. We wanted interviews to be scheduled through the press office so that we would have some knowledge of output. You may disagree with that policy possibly, but I don't think there is any reason why, in running a campaign, we shouldn't be able to control the output of our employees. Much of what they might say could be very inaccurate because, with only a partial knowledge of things, they could get into all sorts of areas that they don't know anything about.¹²⁶

The following comment by reporter Carl Leubsdorf perhaps best sums up the importance to the campaign of controlling media access to the candidate and staff:

The 1972 campaign presented a classic confrontation between two types of campaign, the wide open McGovern campaign and the tightly controlled, closed Nixon campaign. While reporters prefer open campaigns and feel they are good for the country, one unfortunate lesson of 1972 was that a candidate may be better off the more he can control his campaign and keep its details away from the press and public scrutiny.¹²⁷

In summary, the campaign consultant will control access to the candidate and staff to insure that unfavorable coverage is avoided and favorable coverage is emphasized. The consultant's ability to so control the press is dependent upon the campaign's position on the power spectrum between the press and the candidate. The politically successful candidate who has attracted a large media following can, to a large extent, pick and choose what events the media will be allowed access to, and even what medium will have preference. The incumbent president stands very much on the "strong" end of the power spectrum, and no incumbent put that power to better use in controlling the media than did Richard Nixon.

So far this chapter has discussed the techniques employed by the campaign consultant in his relationship with the press. Foremost in this relationship is the consultant's use of the public relations concept of service to the media. The consultant makes the reporters' jobs easier by disseminating campaign information through a wide variety of informational tools.

But the relationship goes beyond the concept of service to include the concept of manipulating, or influencing, the media covering the campaign. The consultant

uses a combination of three broad techniques to accomplish this: (1) he generates favorable coverage through the use of media events; (2) he insures that this favorable coverage is maximized throughout the campaign period by skillful scheduling, campaign pacing, and event orchestration, and (3) he controls the media's access to the candidate and staff to avoid unfavorable coverage and enhance favorable coverage.

So far the discussion has centered on the consultant's relationship with the public, or free, media. The use of paid, or controlled, media must also be briefly considered because it plays an important role in the campaign's overall media strategy.

The Consultant's Use of Controlled Media

A good public relations consultant always considers using all available communications tools in a persuasive campaign, and as Edward Bernays noted in 1923, one of the more important tools to consider is advertising:

In considering his objectives and the mediums through which his potential public can be reached the public relations counsel always considers advertising space as among his most important adjuncts. The wise public relations counsel calls into conference . . . the advertising agent who has made the study his lifework. The public relations counsel and the advertising agency then work out the problem in their respective fields.

Advertising up to the present time has laid its greatest stress upon the creation of demands and markets for specific goods. It is also applied with effectiveness to the propagation of ideas as well. It is particularly effective when used with other methods of appeal.¹²⁸

The strategy of media use described above is exactly that used in the modern campaign--advertising is used in

"combination with other methods of appeal." Specifically, advertising is combined with other controlled media (direct mail, brochures, bumper stickers, telephone calls, neighborhood canvassing, etc.) and uncontrolled media (as manipulated by the consultant to gain favorable coverage) to present the candidate's overall persuasive message. In the modern campaign, advertising, along with all the other media tools, is placed under the control of the public relations consultant to insure that the campaign's central theme is presented in a unified manner. Consultant Theis explains:

. . . the public relations director should exercise responsibility over the advertising materials used in the campaign because neither the candidate nor his campaign manager has time to oversee the infinite details involved in an advertising program. The director should work closely with the advertising agency, making sure that the central theme of the campaign is carried through in all newspaper ads, radio and TV spots, billboard designs, direct mail pieces, etc.¹²⁹

Political advertiser Tony Schwartz describes the importance of insuring that the advertising complements the coverage being received in the uncontrolled, or nonpaid (public) media:

A major problem of political candidates is to structure the effects of nonpaid media, such as news, word of mouth, editorials, etc. A candidate gets more free time in a campaign than paid time. In my work I try to use paid media (political spots) to put nonpaid media in context. I do not see them as unrelated to each other. If there is a lot of news about the candidate, and you do not feel that it is accurately framed by the newscaster, station, or newspaper, you can put it in a proper frame by use of paid media.¹³⁰

Ronald Reagan's 1980 advertising consultant, Donald Raymond, told National Journal of the importance of insuring

that the message and candidate image going out via advertising does not clash with what the voter is receiving via the public media:

You want to have your ads reinforce what he's saying in public; it can't be too different. If the public sees one person during your ads and another person on the evening news, you're finished.¹³¹

Perhaps one of the best ways to insure a unified message is to place the identical message in both paid and nonpaid media, as Elizabeth Drew explains using Carter's 1980 campaign as an example:

Now, shortly after five, the President arrives at an auditorium in Parma, a town just outside Cleveland, for a meeting with senior citizens and community leaders. . . . [Jerry] Rafshoon's film crew is filming this scene [Rafshoon is Carter's media adviser], just as it filmed the rally in Columbus, for use in forthcoming campaign ads--a practice that gives new meaning to the term "media event."¹³²

In short, the modern campaign presents a coordinated message via both the paid and unpaid media. Candidates continue to place a heavy reliance (and commit considerable funds to) campaign advertising, regardless of the amount and quality of the coverage their consultants have managed to obtain from the public media. The main reason for this, as Joseph Napolitan explains, is because it allows for complete message control:

The major advantage of paid electronic advertising, whether the length of the program be 30 seconds or 30 minutes, is that it gives the candidate an opportunity to take his message directly to the people without passing it through any filter. Some analysts contend that it is more important for a candidate to get exposure on a news program than in paid advertising. Personally, in my campaigns, I have not found this

so. The problem with appearing on a news program is that it is the news editor, not the candidate, who decides what the people will see and hear.¹³³

Hence, even though a campaign consultant may be very adept at manipulating the public media to obtain favorable coverage, it still does not afford anything near the total control of the message possible in advertising. Another important reason candidates place heavy reliance on advertising is that, unlike product ads, political ads are something of a novelty and viewers will pay attention to them. Political researchers Thomas Patterson and Robert McClure found this to be true in their study of the 1972 campaign political advertisements aired by the three major networks during the general election period:

A clear indication of presidential advertising's attention-getting ability is that most viewers can fully recall the message of a presidential spot. When asked to describe a commercial they had seen during the 1972 election, 56 percent of the viewers gave a remarkably full and complete description of one, and only 21 percent were unable to recall anything at all from political ads. In market research, any product whose commercials are recalled with half this accuracy is considered to have had a very successful advertising campaign.

People also evaluate presidential advertising differently than product advertising . . . television viewers judge product commercials more on how they communicate their message than on what they say about a product. . . . People judge presidential ads, on the other hand, primarily on what they say, not how they say it. Whether the techniques used in presidential spots are visually appealing or unappealing seems to matter little. Viewers seem concerned mainly with whether the advertising message is truthful and worth knowing.¹³⁴

Paying attention to political ads, however, does not equate to persuasion, as will be discussed later in this section in connection with Patterson and McClure's

findings in this area.

Nevertheless, because campaign ads are watched and remembered, and because the content can be totally controlled, candidates make considerable use of political advertising.

Not only must the advertising theme be coordinated with the overall campaign theme, but it must also be tailored to the various stages of the campaign, as Tony Schwartz explains:

In the early part of a campaign we simply want the voter to think about the candidate and the issues. As the campaign proceeds, we can focus on specifics, such as why someone should support the candidate or why a given problem is important to the voter. Only in the last weeks should we ask voters to come out for what Joe Napolitan calls the one-day-sale. In this way we do not create frustration in a potential voter.¹³⁵

William Lanouette describes the various stages of a presidential advertising campaign:

Traditionally, a rhythm develops for the TV ads as the campaign season progresses. In the early days, sometimes months before the balloting begins, the ads are general in nature and usually biographical.

Once a front-runner and a principal challenger are identified, ads tend to become more pointed--aimed at specific policies or plans put forward by the opposition and, whenever possible, honed to simplify the candidate's own position.

Finally, in states with tight primary races and in the general election campaign, frequently shifting advertising appeals become common. "Negative" advertising, intended to rundown a specific opponent, usually surfaces in the later stages of the months-long struggle.¹³⁶

Throughout the long presidential campaign, advertising is put to various different uses. One such use is defensive--if the opposition has ads, we will too, explains George Bush's 1980 campaign director:

"Most of our effort in Iowa [before the caucuses] was involved with organization," said [David] Keene of the Bush campaign. "But in the final two weeks, we started some defensive ads of our own. In the closing days, we knew people would be hearing about Reagan and Baker and Connally all the time; we wanted them to hear Bush's name too."¹³⁷

Another reason for using campaign ads, says David Sparks, field director for Bush's 1980 campaign, is that they boost the morale of campaign workers and activists:

It fires them up and keeps them motivated to hear their man's name from time to time. It motivates the activists to do the voter identification and the calling necessary to get people out to the polls.¹³⁸

A third important use of campaign advertising is to enhance a candidate's name recognition, assuming he is little-known. David Keene explains this need for recognition for Bush:

TV ads are more important to us this time [1980] than they were to Ford and Reagan in 1976. We started with low name recognition and used paid TV to break through into the public's consciousness. We ran ads in New England as early as last fall, just to acquaint the public with Bush.¹³⁹

A fourth valuable use of advertising is to present a candidate's past performance record, as Ronald Reagan did during the 1980 campaign to show his experiences with welfare reform when he was governor of California.¹⁴⁰

A fifth use of advertising, as noted by David Keene, is to present information concerning the candidate's stand on issues:

Our [Bush campaign's] studies have shown that people get most of their issue information from paid media, because the network news shows tend to cover the horse race aspects of the campaign; who's ahead, who said something stupid. In fact, we find that radio is even more effective than TV for spelling out issues.¹⁴¹

The area of horserace coverage versus issue coverage is discussed in greater detail in the next chapter. Essentially, however, what David Keene says above is correct.

A final important use of advertising is what is known as "responsive advertising." As discussed earlier in this chapter, a good consultant will monitor the media to detect any adverse statements about his candidate or policies. Usually, such statements are forthcoming from the opposition. Additionally, the opposition may make a mistake which could be exploited. This is when the campaign's "reaction team" goes to work, and one of the avenues open to them is to produce reactive ads. Radio is particularly useful for this:

"You can create a radio ad literally overnight, and have it on the air the next morning," said Jan Van Lohuizen, a vice president at V. Lance Tarrance & Associates, the polling firm that worked for Connally until he dropped out of the [1980 Republican primary] race after his South Carolina loss. "After a certain point, usually a few days before the election, you're pretty well locked into your television spots, it's too late for direct mail and the scheduling becomes inflexible. If you want to switch quickly, hitting one issue or responding to somebody's charges, the only way you can do it is by hoping to attract TV and radio coverage or by flooding the airwaves with radio ads."¹⁴²

Hence, campaign advertising is put to a wide variety of uses throughout the campaign period. Of all the media available in which advertising may be placed, for whatever specific purpose, the medium most preferred in a presidential campaign is television. As campaign financial expert Herbert Alexander notes, candidates will spend more money on television in the 1980 campaign than on any other single expenditure:

The Presidential-selection process in 1980--primaries, caucuses, conventions and the general election--will cost about \$225 million, a record amount. The largest single category of expenditure will be television and its related costs [production, etc.]--probably around \$45 million. That's about double what it was in 1976, far exceeding the four-year rise in the Consumer Price Index. And it may even run higher, depending on the size of John Anderson's television spending.¹⁴³

Although presidential candidates place heavy emphasis on television advertising, some critics feel that television political commercials are not effective. Television critic Edwin Diamond is one such skeptic:

As for the political commercial, it is simply hopeless, a shuck. It's not because political advertisements "lie"--most of them do not. The style is just not credible: it is all commercials and no politics. TV viewers understand the process, they enjoy while willingly suspending disbelief. And then, after the commercial is over, they don their skepticism again like people dressing to go out into the winter night. All the political advertising studies have yet to produce a single voter who casts his or her ballot based on what has been on a 30-second spot, or on thirty 30-second spots.¹⁴⁴

"All the political advertising studies" that Diamond refers to above are really not that many, particularly at the presidential campaign level, but there is one large-scale, significant study of televised political advertisements, and it basically confirms what Diamond is saying. Patterson and McClure's 1972 study, the same one mentioned earlier in this section, found that, although people pay attention to presidential campaign advertisements and can remember what they see, few are persuaded to make their choice of candidates based on the advertising:

Voters who choose their candidate during the last two months of a campaign--the time when TV ads are shown--offer the best opportunity to measure

advertising's influence. Any time a voter chose a candidate during this time, we studied the cause of the choice in our interviews. . . .

Only 18 of every 100 voters picked their candidate during the last two months of the 1972 campaign. Of these 18, 14 made their choice on some basis other than their exposure to political spots.

Advertising did effect the remaining four in 18. But even most of these had cogent, logical reasons for their choices and spots could not be said to have manipulated them. Spots are truly manipulative only when they convince the voter to act in the candidate's best interests, over his own.¹⁴⁵

There are certainly some recent examples that seem to support the contention of Diamond, Patterson, and McClure that television political advertising is just not that effective. During the 1980 primaries, John Connally spent more money than any other candidate, much of it going to advertising, for a net result of one convention delegate:

Can an aspirant for the Nation's highest office actually "buy" his way into the Presidency by spending more than anybody else on TV commercials that proclaim his purity of spirit, perspicacity and overall fitness for the top job in the Free World?

The answer clearly is no.

John Connally spent more than any other candidate, Democrat or Republican, in the early campaigning this year (\$12 million, of which \$2 million went for media) and managed to win exactly one convention delegate; and he employed the same TV expert (Roger Ailes) who worked on President Nixon's 1968 campaign [see McGinniss' Selling of the President 1968 for a description of Ailes' work].¹⁴⁶

There is considerable doubt cast as to the persuasive abilities of television advertising in a campaign. Yet, as evidenced by Alexander's projected figures for 1980 expenditures on television given earlier in this section, candidates and their consultants continue to believe in the power of advertising. This statement by Joseph Napolitan perhaps explains as well as any why television advertising is still

such a big factor in campaign strategy:

It has become fashionable for some critics of political campaigns to say that television has outlived its usefulness, that voters do not respond to television advertising, that, in fact, voters resent candidates who use television and turn against them.

My response to such comments is to say that some day I hope to become involved in a political campaign where my candidate's opponent actually believes such statements and stays off television, because other factors being reasonably equal, we should be able to use our monopoly of the airwaves to win the election.¹⁴⁷

Putting it even more succinctly is George Bush's 1980 field director David Sparks: "You can't win with television alone, but you can't win without it either."¹⁴⁸

The effects of television advertising's impact on voters may not be great, but even if it persuades only a handful of people to vote for a candidate, then its continued use is assured. And no candidate for president wants to be the first to test the hypothesis that they can do just as well without television advertising as with it.

Indeed, in 1980, television use by candidates is increasing. One significant trend in television advertising is toward regional use. Melvyn Bloom predicted this trend in 1968, after the extensive use of regional television advertising by Richard Nixon:

The increased use of regional television is an evident trend. A candidate can get the greatest mileage out of area-oriented issues by appearing on regional television hookups in various places around the country. Such appearances are financial compromises, in that they cost somewhat more than a strictly local show, but not anywhere near as much as a network program. . . . Furthermore, these telecasts save the candidate and his party a good deal of barnstorming to small and medium-sized communities¹⁴⁹

Regional television advertising is particularly in

evidence during the increasingly long primary period.

New Hampshire in 1980 serves as a good example:

As the primary race moves from state to state, the media consultants have sought to identify their candidate with the people and problems of each area. George Bush spent more time campaigning in New Hampshire than most of his opponents, and his advertising let people know it: "Others come and go," they said, "but look around--George Bush is here."

A [Howard] Baker commercial running at the same time in New Hampshire was filmed in a 200-year-old house in Amhearst. There was a long-barreled rifle hanging on the wall, and Mr. Baker, seated in front of a wood-burning stove, discussed with a group of Granite Staters his ideas for solving the country's problems 150

In addition to an increase in regional television advertising, candidates have "rediscovered" radio. Radio advertising has many advantages. One already discussed is radio's suitability for reaction advertising. Dan Nimmo cites some other advantages:

Radio has certain advantages over other media. It reaches an audience largely missed by either newspapers or television. The average suburban commuter spends ninety minutes of every working day isolated in his automobile. Radio is his link with the world. Millions of housewives listen to radio during their daily chores. The elderly, who grew up with radio, depend on news broadcasts for information about politics. And the transistor has a sizable audience of young adults still "hooked" on radio as they grow out of their rock-and-roll teens. Radio is also far less expensive for political advertising than is television. 151

A final area worthy of mention is campaign literature. It should be remembered that the consultant's use of "controlled media" refers to more than just advertising. Controlled media also include all the means of communication specifically generated by the campaign--brochures, mailings, bumper stickers, buttons, telephone calling, neighborhood

canvassing, etc. This area is not emphasized in this paper because it is not directly involved in the press-candidate relationship. It is important to know, however, that such campaign-initiated communications are an important part of the overall persuasive process, and they serve to indicate the extent to which the campaign will go to get its message to the voters. Campaign consultants recognize campaign literature as one of the most important of the controlled media. Baus and Ross describe the importance of such pamphlets and brochures:

In a big modern political campaign for high stakes a whole series of pamphlets will be produced. One will be for the farmer, one for the baker, and yet another for the candlestick maker. Plenty of money will be invested in the finest production, the most effective art work, the sharpest typography, all put together with finesse and presented with dramatic composition.¹⁵²

Equally as important as the quality of the pamphlet is the means by which it is distributed, as Steinberg explains:

Any printed matter, whether it is a brochure, flier, or newsletter, is irrelevant unless the campaign has a distribution plan. Printed matter may be distributed (1) at the headquarters; (2) by the candidate during door-to-door appearances; (3) by aides or volunteers who accompany the candidate at appearances, especially at speaking commitments; (4) by volunteers who visit shopping centers, subway stations, bus terminals, or other public thoroughfares; (5) by precinct workers who go door to door in their area; and (6) by cooperating organizations, groups, or adjunct committees that are supporting the candidate.¹⁵³

Steinberg goes on to explain that the most important means of campaign literature distribution, particularly in a large campaign, is direct mailing:

This [direct mail] is the single most effective method

of distributing printed campaign materials . . . all mailings should seek volunteers and funds, as much for image as for practical results. The most important direct mail list is the campaign's own "house" list of those closest to the candidate, his past and present supporters, loyalists and partisans. Other lists can be purchased, rented, or borrowed from county clerks, registrars of voters, party organizations and volunteer clubs, and direct mail companies and list brokers. The mailing operation can utilize labels (usually computer produced) and a professional mailing house, or volunteers can help put out a mailing.¹⁵⁴

In summary, the campaign consultant makes full use of all the available controlled media to present his candidate's messages. The use of controlled media should be carefully coordinated with the message the consultant is attempting to communicate through the public media using media events. This insures a coordinated theme, message, and image for the overall campaign.

Of all the controlled media available to the consultant, the one most preferred in a large campaign is television advertising, although radio advertising and direct-mail campaign literature are also important. Despite some studies showing that television advertising's persuasive effects may be minimal, candidates and their consultants are unwilling to risk campaigning without it.

Conclusion: Is It Time for the Media

To Take a Look Around?

Former President of CBS News Richard Salant says it is time for the media to show some "guts":

And while we're at it, shouldn't we also examine the question whether we aren't suckered by the candidates and their public relations people with

their image campaigns, their photo opportunities, their controlled appearances? Isn't it time for us to screw up our courage and go beneath the surface to explain what's going on--as too few brilliant pieces in print and in broadcast have done in the past? Shouldn't we have the guts, in our daily campaign reports, to say, if it be the fact, that candidate A or B said nothing new and raced through six cities creating media events? Sure we should. But we haven't.¹⁵⁵

Melvyn Bloom shares Salant's concern, saying that the media are falling into the increasingly sophisticated public relations "trap":

On the one hand, the media techniques of the [campaign] professionals are so sophisticated as to open up an entirely new and quite involved series of ethical problems in political reporting. Those involved in these very media, however--the reporters and editors who follow the campaigns for the public--are generally not seeing in macrocosm what has happened to their own field. Thus, they go on reporting the more conventional and traditional aspects of political campaigning. This is really the part of the campaign that is staged precisely for the newsmen to see and report, and they fall right into the trap like a duck for a bobbing decoy and a rubberized whistle.¹⁵⁶

The campaign consultant's ability to manipulate the media is certainly a difficult thing to measure. Perhaps such warnings to the press to "wake up" before it is too late are to some extent justified. One thing is clear, however. The media expertise brought to the campaign by the professional consultant is unlike anything in the past. Television correspondent Dan Rather discovered this in 1972:

Bob Haldeman, who is at the apex of the Nixon image-making apparatus, thinks he knows as much or more about my business than I do, and I'm inclined to think that he's correct. He came out of . . . an advertising agency (J. Walter Thompson) in Los Angeles. He's made a life-time study of the techniques of manipulating my business.¹⁵⁷

Journalists are increasingly coming to the realization

that, as one reporter told Timothy Crouse, "I don't think that we [the press] put in nearly as much thought to covering a campaign as they [the professional consultants] put in to [sic] how we're going to cover a campaign. . . ."158

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER III

THE MEDIA'S EFFECTS ON THE CAMPAIGN

When the media's role in the campaign process is examined from the consultant's viewpoint, the public media are seen as tools to be manipulated for the benefit of the campaign. Indeed, such manipulation occurs, but this is not the entire picture. In the symbiotic relationship between the press and the candidate, the media also have several effects on the campaign. These effects, while not overtly manipulative, nevertheless have a significant influence on the way the campaign is run.

The most important influence of the media is their role as "Great Mentioner," as political scientist Leon Sigal describes it:

The self-absorption of the journalists and the paranoia of politicians combine to exaggerate the influence of the news media on elections. It is difficult to demonstrate empirically their impact on electoral outcomes. Yet, if the importance of the press at election time is commonly blown out of proportion, its importance in the preprimary and early primary stages merits closer scrutiny

The impact of the news media lies in their role as the Great Mentioner--paying attention to some candidates and not to others, conferring name recognition on the few, thereby boosting their standing in the polls and increasing their future news coverage.¹

The media have become an integral part of the election nominating process. It is in their role as Great Mentioner that the media wield considerable power.

A second important effect of the media on the campaign is the imposition of journalistic news values on the political process. In other words, the campaign is covered according to journalistic, not political, news values. These values are reflected in what is most commonly called horse-race coverage. The election is treated as a race, or game, in which the most important aspect to be reported is who is ahead and who will win. In this context, drama, hoopla, trivia, poll results, and personality are more newsworthy than policy, issues and candidate qualifications. Political reporter James Perry describes this journalistic interest in the race:

Most of the time, reporters are not deeply committed, or even seriously interested, in issues. Which is not to say that reporters in both print and on television don't take strong points of view. They do, all the time, for too much of the time. But not on issues, not on ideology. They are more interested in such questions as a candidate's style (or more frequently, his lack of it), his professionalism, his ability as a performer, the quality of his staff, the reaction by the crowd to his speeches, and, finally and most importantly, his chances for success.²

A third area of influence on the campaign is the increasing use of polls by the media. Media polls may adversely affect a campaign's chances for success. Alternatively, the media polls may provide some balance against the profusion of polling done by the campaigners.

These media effects on the campaign will be examined in closer detail in the remainder of this chapter.

The Media in the Nominating Process: The Great Mentioner

You guys. All you guys in the media. All of

politics has changed because of you. You've broken all the machines and the ties between us and Congress and the city people . . . Teddy, Tunney. They're your creations, your puppets. No machine could ever create a Teddy Kennedy. Only you guys. They're all yours. Your product.³

-Lyndon B. Johnson

While Johnson may have overstated the case, the media's role in "creating" candidates does seem to be on the rise. The American Assembly, after a study of the presidential nominating process in 1976, noted the media's increasing role as "deliberator and perhaps even arbiter":

Democratizing reforms have produced a proliferation of presidential primaries and helped to hasten the decline in the influence of political party leaders, particularly in their traditional roles as screeners of candidates and mobilizers of voter support. Into the resultant vacuum, the mass media of communication have been progressively drawn in the role of conscious deliberator and perhaps arbiter. Candidates for the Presidency have rapidly adapted to this shift, recognizing that there stands between them and their hoped-for voters a newly-significant intermediary: the media themselves, who, like it or not, must direct the national attention to a reasonably recognizable selection of candidates, issues and probabilities.⁴

In short, with the rise of the mass media campaign, the press now has the role of evaluating the candidates for the voters and deciding which candidates are serious contenders--which, as Edwin Diamond describes, are "viable." Candidates try their best to get the Great Mentioner's blessing of "viability":

In the bad old days, a candidate had to reach a relatively small number of fat-cat givers and power brokers. Now, each candidate must win over hundreds of delegates, potential campaign workers, and many small contributors; he must convince them that he is indeed a "viable" candidate. In a crowded field, each candidate must look for ways of appearing

"viable" by attracting the press' eye. A magazine cover is one way, an appearance on Face the Nation is another. "Viability" means: the press is taking the candidate seriously; so should the voters.⁵

The criteria by which the media judge such viability, or seriousness, are rather subjective, as political scientist James David Barber describes:

Into this calculation gap [in deciding who the candidates will be] steps consensus (one hears the same names over and over again) and assertion (deciding "by fiat" which might be called decision by announcement) and well exercised instinct ("seat of the pants," "top of the head," or "gut" reactions). The candidate names actually allotted space or time in reporting are very few. Insofar as the matter gets argued about, it turns on who is "serious."

Listening to leading journalists talk about who's serious, a pattern-seeking professor can hear a pattern. In fact, I think, journalistic seriousness-assessors use a scheme in which "personality" considerations appear in the dark before the heavy coverage season dawns.

A serious (and thus to-be-covered) candidate is one who has in his bucket a combined sufficiency of motive, opportunity, and resources. Here motive means ambition--how desirous is he? Opportunity means chances--early in the game this is roughly what we used to call "availability." Resource means not only money and time, but also "organization," advisors, skill, etc.⁶

As might be imagined in a system reliant on such hard-to-determine criteria as motive, opportunity, and resources, it is not surprising that even the best political reporters err in their early judgments of viability. For example, David Broder wrote in the Washington Post on 29 February 1972:

McGovern is a serious, capable opponent, who has waged an excellent campaign here, but he has no natural base in New Hampshire, as Muskie does, and he has only the dimmest chance of being the Democratic presidential nominee.⁷

Since the criteria used in determining seriousness

are so hard to measure, particularly early in the campaign when little is known about some candidates, such as McGovern, it would seem logical to withhold judgment until the primary season has started. Then the candidates are better known and some results are in, making it easier to assess seriousness. But, as James Perry notes of the 1972 election, the urge to predict is irresistible:

In a column that appeared in the Washington Post on Tuesday, April 11, 1972, David Broder wrote:

"The hardest thing for any newspaperman to learn, if my own case is any example, is how to wait for the story to end before leaping into print to tell its meaning."

. . . For Broder and for most of us, 1972 was leap year.

We leaped into print to award the nomination to Muskie, even before the first of 23 primaries took place. We read Dr. Gallup's famous poll and we leaped into print to write off George McGovern. We never imagined George Wallace would run in the Democratic primaries, and we leaped into print to award Florida to Jackson or Muskie or almost anyone else. We waited breathlessly for John Lindsay to make up his mind; when he did, we leaped into print to say he would put an end to the McGovern nonsense. We thought Hubert Humphrey was old and foolish, and we couldn't wait to leap into print to say so. . . .

This sort of thing is sheer folly. . . . It does us no good and it does the candidates and the public real harm. Because we selected Muskie as the front-runner before a single vote was cast, we hand-delivered him very special problems that he couldn't handle (and probably shouldn't have had to handle, then). At the same time, we put all the other candidates in also-ran positions from which some of them would never recover.

We have developed a system of primaries, caucuses, and conventions for choosing the nominee of our two major parties. We are mischievous and misguided when we move into the system and begin setting our own rules and then keeping the score.⁸

Indeed, as Eric Sevareid says in a passage quoted by journalist Paul Weaver, the media cannot avoid the "heady wine of prediction," despite the possible adverse effects of such hasty prediction as noted above by Perry:

Elections make the press drunk. On the eve of the Presidential primary campaigns, many people in the press . . . take the vow. The heady wine of prediction and prophecy will not touch their lips this time. They tell themselves, why try to predict what's going to happen before it happens? That's what elections are for--to tell us the answer. But the temptation is too great, we fall off the wagon every time, frequently on our faces.⁹

Determining seriousness and predicting outcomes, "leaping into print," as Broder called it, is not only an irresistible journalistic urge, but also an unavoidable part of the journalistic process, as political scientist F. Christopher Arterton explains:

In the preprimary and early primary periods . . . the indicators of political support [for the candidate] are at their poorest. At this time, however, the journalistic community is under considerable pressure to predict the nomination outcome as soon as possible. That pressure has at least four sources. Individual journalists build and maintain professional reputations for sagacity among their colleagues. News organizations compete to provide their readers, viewers, or listeners with rapid yet accurate reporting. A large field of candidates confronts media organizations with a difficult problem of assigning resources to provide coverage of everyone. Separating out those candidates with serious prospects for winning the nomination mitigates this problem; the earlier this can be achieved, the better. And, lastly, as campaigns gain political support, the candidate and upper-level staff become increasingly inaccessible. News reporting organizations, understandably, wish to assign reporters or correspondents to expanding campaigns while there still remain prospects for developing sources within the campaign and garnering a personal understanding of the candidate. Thus, both in the organizational planning for the reporting of news and in the substance of the early news reports, journalists undergo forces counter to the cautious treatment warranted by the inaccuracy of the available support indicators.¹⁰

Hence the journalist, for a variety of reasons, tends to leap into print as early as possible to determine

which candidates are serious, and because the indicators of seriousness are so difficult to analyze early in the campaign, the media are too often wrong, and this could affect a candidate's chances. As Edwin Diamond notes, the press' desire to leap into print has not lessened in 1980:

First of all, reporters like to play handicapper, "positioning" the field of candidates. While no fewer than seven Republicans announced they were "serious" candidates . . . the campaign journalists did not take all of the candidates with equal "seriousness." Columnist Jack Germond and Jules Witcover, for example, broke the field into the "heavyweights"--Reagan, Bush, John Connally and Howard Baker--and the "middleweights"--Philip Crane, Robert Dole and John Anderson. Sometimes the field was described as "front-runner" Reagan against "the rest of the pack." Reagan, Bush, Connally and Baker were also known as the Big Four; the Little Three, according to William Safire of the New York Times, were merely "running for exercise."¹¹

The impact of such political handicapping might not be so significant if each individual medium were equally important in the process. If each were doing its own predictions of "seriousness," then the conflicting voices and opinions would be great indeed, and the impact of those predictions on the candidates' campaigns would not be so great.

Such is not the case, of course, because certain of the more prestigious media play an exaggerated role in the predicting process. Leon Sigal calls them the "Big Eleven":

The three television networks and two wire services are the principal wholesalers. Two news-weeklies and four newspapers--The Wall Street Journal, The New York Times, The Washington Post, and the Los Angeles Times, along with their associated news services--are retailers in exclusive markets, catering to the nation's political elite. . . . the Big Eleven dominate the

national political news market. And among the Big Eleven there is opinion leadership The turning point in campaign coverage comes when the Big eleven designate their beats and assign reporters to cover a few of the candidates full time.¹²

It follows from this that the national political reporters of the Big Eleven, and a few others, are the opinion leaders among the campaign reporters. Timothy Crouse describes them:

The journalists involved in this [candidate] selection process were a very small group, consisting mostly of the national political correspondents, and they formed what David Broder called "the screening committee." Of the two-hundred-odd men and women who followed the candidates in 1972, fewer than thirty were full-time national reporters.¹³

The effect on a candidate's campaign that one of the "screening committee" can have is best exemplified by New York Times reporter R. W. Apple's "discovery" of Jimmy Carter after the Ames, Iowa, straw poll prior to the 1976 Democratic caucuses:

. . . the payoff of the Apple piece was acceptance [of Carter] by national journalists and expanding coverage. In American Journal: The Events of 1976 Elizabeth Drew summarized the relationship this way:

A story by R. W. Apple, Jr., in the Times last October [1975], saying that Carter was doing well in Iowa was itself a political event, prompting other newspaper stories that Carter was doing well in Iowa, and then more news-magazines and television coverage for Carter than might otherwise have been his share.

Dick Duncan of Time recalled the effect of the Apple piece on other journalists as follows:

. . . there was absolutely no doubt in my mind that . . . when Jonny [sic] Apple writes a story on the front page of the New York Times out of the blue, ordaining a new phenomenon, that that was the most

important single event in the relationship between the media and Jimmy Carter.¹⁴

The importance of the elites of the screening committee in the nominating process is not lost on the wise candidate and his consultants. Witness this memorandum written by Carter's 1976 campaign manager, Hamilton Jordan, in November 1972 and quoted by Jules Witcover in Marathon:

Like it or not, there exists an Eastern liberal news establishment which has tremendous influence in this country all out of proportion to its actual audience. The views of this small group of opinionmakers and the papers they represent are noted and imitated by other columnists and newspapers throughout the country and the world. Their recognition and acceptance of your candidacy as a viable force with some chance of success could establish you as a serious contender worthy of the financial support of major party contributors. They could have an equally adverse effect, dismissing your effort as being regional or an attempt to secure the second spot on the ticket.¹⁵

Because of the difficulty in predicting seriousness, even for the media elites described above by Jordan, the press places heavy emphasis on the early caucuses and primaries because they represent the first "hard news" to back-up the predictions. As noted by Lippmann in Chapter I, it is the nature of news that the journalist prefers a "manifestation of events". The first caucuses and primaries are such a manifestation, and hence, as Arterton notes, they receive an inordinate amount of media attention, despite their limited value as predictors:

. . . the early caucuses and primaries are seen as the first "hard news" stories of the presidential race, a perception which almost guarantees an inflated value placed on the results of these events. The assumption that these early delegate selection events have improved validity over

indicators available during the preprimary season warrants skepticism. The unrepresentative nature of early contests is neglected because finally the contest has begun and there is, at last, hard news to report. This reasoning accounts, I believe, for the frequently remarked overabundance of coverage devoted to the initial primaries and caucuses and overestimation of the significance of these early results.¹⁶

Indeed, it seems to be increasingly the case that the first "hard news" need not involve any delegate selections, as evidenced by the increasing number of early "straw polls" and "straw votes," which the media cannot resist covering. Elaine K. Kamarck of the Democratic National Committee noted this trend when reporters flocked to Florida to report on its "insignificant" 1980 Democratic straw poll. The straw poll was taken on 15 November 1979, of delegates to the Democratic state convention which in turn selected delegates for the national convention. However, the delegates' votes at the national convention would be apportioned according to the results of the Florida primary. Hence, the poll means nothing as far as apportionment of delegate votes is concerned. Nevertheless, as Karmarck notes, " . . . when Carter won [the straw poll] in Florida, David Broder took up the front page of the Washington Post to say, 'This doesn't matter.' The article said 'Carter just won here by 65% of the vote, but it doesn't matter.'" ¹⁷

The greatest of the media extravaganzas in the early primary period, however, is what political scientist Donald Matthews calls the "great New Hampshire overkill." As Matthews explains, using 1976 as an example, the New Hampshire primary traditionally receives media attention far in

excess of what the number of delegates involved would indicate its importance to be:

In 1976 the three national television networks presented 100 stories on the New Hampshire primary or exactly 2.63 stories per delegate selected there! None of the other early primaries received half as much attention from television. While the print media did not overdo New Hampshire as extravagantly as NBC, CBS, and ABC, they were not too far behind in the great New Hampshire overkill of 1976.

The consequences of the media infatuation with the New Hampshire primary are obvious--"winners" of that contest receive far more favorable publicity and a far greater boost toward the Presidency than the "winners" of other primaries.¹⁸

The veracity of Matthews' last sentence is easily verified by comparing the coverage received by Senator Henry Jackson, Democratic winner of the Massachusetts primary in 1976 (the next primary after New Hampshire and one involving considerably more delegates), and that received by Jimmy Carter for winning New Hampshire. Ben Wattenberg, Jackson's adviser, explains:

After the Massachusetts primary, Jackson, unlike Carter, was not on the cover of Time; he was not on the cover of Newsweek; we did not get articles about his cousin who has a worm farm. And that was the story of the Jackson campaign for the next six weeks, and that was what I think killed that campaign. Jackson had won a totally unanticipated victory, beyond what the press had expected, in a state with ten times as many delegates as New Hampshire, and the effect was barely visible. We were dismayed.¹⁹

If the Jackson campaign was "dismayed" over the lack of attention their Massachusetts victory received, they were also, therefore, ignorant of the media's role in the nominating process. The Carter campaign was not, as this statement by Gerald Rafshoon, Carter's media adviser,

indicates:

We made New Hampshire a showcase for presenting Jimmy Carter--as the candidate from outside Washington, as the centrist, as the Democratic candidate who could win the election. It was very important for us to win the first major Northern primary. . . . A lot of our time and all the money we had were being spent in New Hampshire. We understood the media, and so we knew that our candidate would get a lot of attention in New Hampshire because the press was giving so much attention there.²⁰

The 1980 New Hampshire primary was no different. The media placed heavy emphasis on it, despite the increasing number of election events prior to New Hampshire. Broadcasting magazine reports:

It may be too much to say that the media overwhelmed the event in New Hampshire. But it's probably not too much to say that they seem to have tried.

Never mind that the Iowa caucuses and the Democratic caucuses in Maine had already attracted considerable national attention, thereby dulling New Hampshire's claim to the first significant event of the presidential season. As NBC news executive Gordon Manning pointed out . . . , New Hampshire "is still the first state primary in which people vote directly for a candidate."²¹

As the article goes on to point out, the networks alone committed almost 500 people to covering the New Hampshire primary, not to mention coverage by the independent stations and print reporters.²²

The importance of receiving attention from the Great Mentioner as a serious candidate or as an early winner is verified by political scientist Thomas Patterson's study of the 1976 election. Patterson found that voter recognition of a candidate is directly related to the amount of news coverage the candidate receives. In what Patterson describes as the "threshold effect," the candidate who

receives a significant amount of publicity will enjoy a dramatic rise in voter awareness, while the candidate with only slight coverage is not aided:

The amount of coverage a candidate received was strongly related to the public recognition he gained--the correlation exceeded +.90. Importantly, though, the relationship was not strictly linear. Small amounts of coverage resulted in stable or even declining recognition, a moderate amount contributed modestly to the public's awareness of the candidate receiving it, and intense coverage led to a dramatic increase in the public's familiarity with a candidate. In other words, within the relationship were thresholds at which the impact of news coverage on public awareness changed significantly. . . .

When a presidential candidate is fortunate enough to find himself constantly in the headlines, the effect can be sudden as it is dramatic. Carter had become a well-known figure by April. He was known to four of every five adults only two months into a campaign he had entered as a virtual stranger.²³

Such is the power of the Great Mentioner, particularly for the presidential candidate starting out with little national recognition. Because of this need for recognition early in the campaign, the candidate and his consultants must court the press, as consultant Arnold Steinberg advises:

Even in presidential and other highly visible campaigns, the news director cannot wait for the media to initiate meetings. Although the campaign may be the story to cover once it gets underway and many reporters will be initiating contact with the campaign, the preliminary phase requires the campaign to initiate contact.²⁴

As Steinberg indicates, the candidate should make as many contacts with the media as possible even before the first caucuses and primaries. The Carter campaign in 1976 was planning such contacts as early as November 1972. Jules

Witcover quotes Hamilton Jordan's strategy memorandum:

"Stories in The New York Times and Washington Post do not just happen but have to be carefully planned and planted," Jordan wrote. He submitted [to Carter] a list of nationally known writers "who you know or need to know," and advised: "You can find ample excuse for contacting them, writing them a note complimenting them on an article or column and asking that they come to see you when convenient. Some people like Tom Wicker or Mrs. Katharine Graham are significant enough to spend an evening or leisurely weekend with."²⁵

The courting of the press, which for little-known candidates starts well before the first primaries, continues through the early primary period. Until a contender receives the label of "serious candidate" from the Great Mentioner, he must struggle to gain as much media attention as possible. Reporter Carl Leubsdorf describes how accessible a candidate can be at this early stage of the election, using McGovern in 1972 as an example:

I can recall his [McGovern's] telling me one night in early January 1972, as we bounced around on an icy New Hampshire road, how he would do well in New Hampshire, win in Wisconsin, and then capture the nomination with a victory in California over the survivor of the battle in the party's center between Senators Muskie and Humphrey--he correctly thought it would be Humphrey.

We were alone in the car, except for the driver, a common occurrence in the days before primary contenders had Secret Service protection. But even with the Secret Service around, the kind of personal discussion between a single reporter and a candidate in an intimate setting often occurs in the pre-election year period.

In addition to greeting enthusiastically any national reporters who want to cover them, candidates often seek out reporters, to make themselves better known or even to ask them for advice.²⁶

While it is important for little-known candidates to seek out and obtain as much media coverage as possible during the preprimary and early primary period, it is even

more important to win some of the early election events, as this will insure much coverage and a blessing of "seriousness" from the Mentioner. Examples of this, most notably the New Hampshire primary, have already been discussed. Determining which candidate "wins" these early contests, however, is not simply a matter of tallying up the votes. The true "winner" is the candidate who is perceived by the media to have done the best, and this is more than a matter of obtaining the most votes, as Arterton explains:

A given candidate's receiving only a bare majority of the votes may well indicate weaknesses which could be consequential in succeeding primaries; a narrow loss may demonstrate growing strength. Establishing the context within which the results of presidential primaries are to be understood is, in short, a matter of interpretation. Needless to say, the evidence needed to support that interpretation is difficult to obtain, thereby placing a premium upon the judgment of the individual or group of individuals who earn their living by making such interpretations, i.e., political journalists and practicing politicians.

Those who manage presidential campaigns uniformly believe that interpretations placed upon campaign events are more important than the events themselves. . . . Particularly in the early nomination stages, perceptions outweigh reality in terms of their political impact. Since journalists communicate these perceptions to voters and party activists and since part of the reporter's job is creating these interpretations, campaigners believe that journalists can and do affect whether their campaign is viewed as succeeding or failing, and that this perception in turn will determine their ability to mobilize political resources in the future: 27
endorsements, volunteers, money, and hence, votes.

The two examples most often cited to show the power of media interpretation in deciding who won or lost an event are McCarthy's 1968 and McGovern's 1972 "wins" in New Hampshire:

In 1968 . . . the political reporters declared that Sen. Eugene J. McCarthy, the anti-war crusader, had "won" a "moral victory" in the New Hampshire primary because he garnered 42.2 per cent of the vote. Lyndon B. Johnson actually won 49.2 per cent that year, but pundits declared him a loser because his showing was not as strong as they thought it should have been for an incumbent.

The same thing happened in New Hampshire in 1972, when Sen. Edmund S. Muskie of Maine won 46.4 per cent of the Democratic primary vote, compared with 37.1 per cent for Sen. George McGovern of South Dakota. Yet Muskie "lost," according to many reporters, because he was expected to win at least 50 per cent.²⁸

In 1974 Hamilton Jordan, in another of his perceptive memoranda to Carter, made note of these two examples and warned of the significance of media interpretation:

The press shows an exaggerated interest in the early primaries as they represent the first confrontation between candidates, their contrasting strategies and styles, which the press has been writing and speculating about for two years. We would do well to understand the very special and powerful role the press plays in interpreting the primary results for the rest of the nation. What is actually accomplished in the New Hampshire primary is less important than how the press interprets it for the nation. Handled properly, a defeat can be interpreted as a holding action and a mediocre showing as a victory. [We] remember the McGovern and McCarthy campaigns of 1972 and 1968 as victories when in fact they ran second to Muskie and Johnson.²⁹

The Carter campaign, keeping this in mind, was careful to avoid over-predicting to the media the campaign's chances of success in the early contests. By never saying how well they expected to do in a primary, aided by the fact that Carter was an unknown of whom little was expected at any rate, the Carter campaign managed to set a low level of expectations, as Arterton explains:

While admitting the handicaps which their lack of contact with the national press implied, Jordan also saw advantages in that the national press would expect less from them in terms of performance

in the early primaries and caucuses.

You're talking about continually over-performing in terms of arbitrary expectations they set for you. And they might set high expectations for us if we were up there [in D.C.] day in and day out, saying that we're going to do this and we're going to do that. . . .

Carter's media strategy, thus, was to avoid the temptation to predict specific primary victories as an inducement for attracting support, so that their achievements would come as a surprise to political observers, principally journalists. They believed . . . that primary victories would be measured not as absolutes, but against expectations established by journalists and the campaigns themselves.³⁰

A 1976 example of the dangers of over-predicting is supplied by Ronald Reagan's campaign. In the New Hampshire primary, Reagan lost to the incumbent Gerald Ford by only a narrow margin, but because Reagan's people in New Hampshire were openly predicting a victory, Reagan suffered from what Jules Witcover called "the affliction of great expectations."³¹ Reagan's campaign manager, John Sears, and his consultant, Lyn Nofziger, explain:

SEARS: Most of the people who are here [at a post-election roundtable discussion], whichever race they've been in, would, I think, agree on one thing--that what happens matters less than the perception about what happens. Even though we came closer than anybody else to winning the New Hampshire primary over a sitting president, we were perceived as having lost it. One of the reasons for this was that we were perceived during December, January and February as having a better organization in New Hampshire than Mr. Ford did.

NOFZIGER: Toward the end of that campaign, the press perceived Reagan as a winner, and when he didn't win, the natural assumption was that he was a loser. In addition, our people traveling with Reagan up there . . . were looking toward a victory and were optimistic, and that optimism came through in their individual dealings with the press. The day after the

election, the letdown on that airplane and elsewhere was so noticeable that the traveling press perceived the Reagan people as having viewed it as a loss. That naturally added to their own perception of it as a loss.³²

The above example supplies one more reason why, from the consultant's point of view, staff access to the media must be controlled, as discussed in the last chapter. Once a staff member predicts victory, or the size of the victory, to the media, then the candidate in question is committed to attaining that level of victory to avoid being labeled a loser.

The importance of being the "perceived victor" in the early caucuses and primaries cannot be overestimated. As noted earlier, the volume of press coverage resulting from such early victories, notably New Hampshire, goes a long way toward boosting a candidate's name recognition among the voters and toward gaining acceptance by the Great Mentioner as a serious candidate. Perhaps even more importantly, however, the perceived victor is viewed as a successful candidate by the voters based upon the favorable coverage his campaign accrues. As Paul Weaver explains, using television as an example, the winner becomes the "front runner," and is transformed from a "winner into a winner-type" because of the influx of favorable coverage:

Winners in the early primaries were given the role of front-runner--cast as the hero of the play. As television news defines him, the front-runner isn't simply the candidate with the most votes; he is a person who, by virtue of his success, has the character of a winner. He is "serene." Everything goes well for him; his campaign organization works efficiently, his bank account is flush, his issues take hold, his opponents go on the defensive

and fall by the wayside. As a result his candidacy has "momentum," and in time he has what CBS's Ed Rable called "the kind of invincibility that assures a candidate the nomination." In short, the alchemy of television news's melodramatic imperative transforms a winner into a winner-type and victory into evidence of absolute invincibility.³³

While Weaver is perhaps overstating the case, there is certainly some truth in what he says. Patterson's study of the 1976 campaign, which included an analysis of print as well as television news content, found that the winners do, indeed, receive not only more coverage (the threshold effect as noted earlier), but also more favorable coverage:

Evaluations of the candidates were keyed primarily to their success. A winning candidate was said to be an effective campaigner and organizer while a loser was normally presented as lacking in these talents. Moreover, since popular support is considered a sine qua non of success, a winning candidate usually was described by such adjectives as likable and appealing. Although a losing candidate normally was not described in opposing terms, it was often stated or implied that voters were not particularly attracted by his personality and style. During the primaries Carter received more than two favorable news mentions about his performance and personality for each unfavorable one. No other candidate received even a favorable balance of coverage.³⁴

Taking the favorable results of perceived victory one step farther, it is possible that the perceived victor in the early primaries and caucuses, as a result of receiving the most coverage as well as the most favorable coverage, could generate a "bandwagon." Reagan's 1976 pollster, Richard Wirthlin, is a believer in the bandwagon effect:

Some have said that the Reagan [1976] strategy appeared erratic. I think it was really two-tiered, rather than erratic. The first tier was heavily based upon developing momentum out of New Hampshire. I was skeptical of that initially, because I had read all of the classic academic

papers which say that the bandwagon effect doesn't exist. But then we did some very careful analysis of the impact of the New Hampshire primary on past elections, particularly on the Democratic side, and found that we could expect a gain or loss of about fifteen to eighteen percentage points in the primaries following. I turned from being a skeptic to being a strong supporter of the momentum hypothesis.³⁵

In the last chapter, the possibility of pacing a campaign via proper scheduling, thereby imparting a sense of momentum, was discussed. In a presidential primary, however, no amount of adroit scheduling of media events can substitute for the momentum gained from being the perceived victor. Patterson's 1976 study found that, for Carter's campaign, a bandwagon effect did occur, because the conditions were right:

Information [from the media] about the candidates' chances can result in a bandwagon--the situation where large numbers of voters choose to back the candidate who is ahead. For a bandwagon to occur, however, two conditions must be met: first, voters must be largely unfettered by other influences; second, they must be convinced that the leading candidate is almost certain to win.

A case in point is the 1976 Democratic nominating contest. When the Democratic primaries began, most rank-and-file Democrats had few constraints on their thinking. They were concerned about the nation's unemployment level and still troubled by Watergate, but this discontent was directed against the Republican Party. Unlike Vietnam in 1968 and 1972, no issue dominated their thoughts about the party's primaries. Excepting Wallace, most Democrats had no strong feelings one way or the other about their party's active candidates. . . .

Lacking any firm notion of whom or what they wanted, most Democrats were influenced by the news coverage and outcomes of the early primaries. When a voter is firmly committed to a particular candidate or viewpoint, this attitude provides a defense against change. The commitment leads voters to see events and personalities selectively, in the way they want to see them, thus resulting in the reinforcement of existing attitudes. When voters' attitudes are weak, their perceptual defenses are also weak. When this occurs . . . , voters are likely to

accept incoming information in a rather direct way. . . . Their perspective becomes that of the communicator

This was the process of decision for many Democratic voters during the 1976 primaries. They had no strong commitments before the campaign began, but developed perceptions of the race that led them to accept Carter and reject his opponents. In their minds the central concern became the candidates' electoral success and, once the race was seen in this way, they embraced the winner and rejected the losers.³⁶

Hence, given the right conditions, a bandwagon effect may occur. Paul Lazarsfeld et alii found a similar effect among undecided voters in the 1940 presidential election.³⁷ Even if an actual bandwagon effect does not always occur, the amount of favorable coverage a candidate derives from winning the early primaries is significant.

If there is not always a bandwagon effect among voters, there is certainly always a bandwagon effect among the media as they flock to the press bus of the perceived victors, as Jules Witcover describes during Carter's 1976 campaign:

But with the reports of Carter's successes in Iowa and neighboring Maine [caucuses], it was hard for anyone to ignore him. Interest and contributions picked up. And the publicity attendant on those early Carter victories assured him of special radio, television, and press coverage. For any little-known candidate, the customary motorcade is the candidate's car, perhaps with an enterprising reporter stuffed into the back seat alongside him, and a staff aide or two up front. That was how it was for most of the pack in New Hampshire. But in Carter's case a chartered bus now followed him, carrying his large press contingent. By such signs are winners and prospective winners gauged.³⁸

Of course, momentum, once attained, does not last through too many defeats, particularly if one of those defeats is the New Hampshire primary. This is what happened to the

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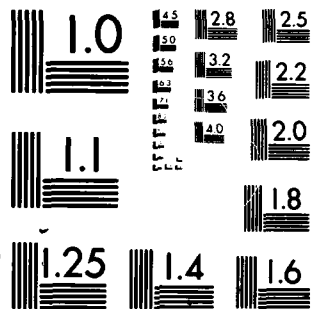
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1980 campaign of George Bush which started out with such a promising victory in the Iowa caucuses:

"Reporters are notoriously fickle," [Lawrence] Barrett [of Time magazine] said. "They join up en masse while a candidate is doing well, then drop him when he is down."

Bush, for example, picked up a big press group after his victory in Iowa, then lost much of it following his poor showing in New Hampshire and the southern tier of states. By the time he reached Illinois, there was a noticeable lack of "name" journalists in his party.³⁹

Indeed, just as the reporters flock to the perceived victor, the losers are left to scramble for whatever media coverage they can get. Such is the fate of those not selected as "serious" by the Great Mentioner. As Newsweek reporter Peter Goldman explains to Arterton, one such non-selectee in 1976 was Morris Udall, a chronic second-place finisher in the primaries:

It's possible that Udall had at least an arguable complaint about what's happened to him, you know with his wins and his inability to draw attention to himself and his positions and his continuing name recognition problem. So that . . . even after all this time [campaigning], he's got to explain to people who he is, in some states . . . when Carter has a couple of covers in each of the newsmagazines, he gets most of the air time--not most of it, but a good bit of it on the 11:30 primary night shows, and the "Today Show" and the "Evening News" the next day--and so the focus tends to be on the front runner, and I think some of the "also rans" (Udall is the most conspicuous, I think) tend to get lost in the shuffle, and they may have a legitimate complaint.⁴⁰

Patterson's 1976 study verifies the discrepancy in coverage between the victor and the "also rans." The difference in coverage in the early primaries, notably New Hampshire, has already been discussed. This difference continued throughout the primary period:

In the typical week following each primary, the first-place finisher received nearly 60 percent of the news coverage given the primary's participants; the second-place finisher received about 20 percent, the third-place finisher about 15 percent, and the fourth-place finisher about 5 percent. In the 13 primary weeks of 1976, the one substantial gap in coverage allotment occurred between the first and second places, making the difference between a first-place finish and anything less a crucial one for the candidates.

This imbalance reflected no obvious bias by the press toward a particular candidate. In the weeks that Carter finished first, he received more coverage than he did other weeks. In the weeks that Jackson, Brown, and Church won primaries, their coverage was heavier. By the time other candidates started winning more often, Carter had accumulated enough delegates to be marked the probable nominee and therefore to receive more coverage even during winless weeks than did the others. He received by far the largest share of the 1976 coverage of the Democratic race.⁴¹

Carter was undoubtedly aided in this process by his "run everywhere" strategy. This strategy of entering every primary race, coupled with a little old-fashioned luck, insured Carter a "win" in at least one state every week, which helped to offset his losses in other states during that same week.⁴² Carter was quick to manipulate this into favorable coverage (see last chapter's example of how Carter manipulated his Ohio primary win to best advantage, offsetting simultaneous losses in California and New Jersey).

Hence, as Goldman noted earlier, the "also rans" do tend to get lost in the media "shuffle." If there was one candidate in 1976 who best typified what can happen when one is lost in the shuffle, it would have to be third-party candidate Eugene McCarthy. McCarthy likened his efforts to attract media attention as akin to "walking through deep snow."⁴³ In an article written by McCarthy after the election,

he quotes U.S. Court of Appeals Judge George E. MacKinnon, who describes how the media can "freeze out" a candidate by not deeming him "significant" (this statement was part of an opinion handed down in a suit brought by McCarthy against the networks):

Thus, the broadcasters start by determining how significant a particular candidate is. If they determine that he is not significant, then the amount of publicity he receives is greatly reduced--he may be effectively "frozen out" from any substantial news coverage during the entire campaign. . . .

Candidates whom the media freezes [sic] out from the beginning will practically never be able to demonstrate that the media's news judgments are unreasonable because they can never show how significant their campaign might have become if they had received fair coverage from the beginning for the issues they raised. Thus, the media's early "evaluation" becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy.⁴⁴

If the networks chose to ignore McCarthy, so too did the news magazines. Researchers Einsiedel and Bibbee analyzed the content of Time, Newsweek, and U.S. News and World Report to determine the extent of coverage for third-party and minority party candidates. Their findings:

. . . more than 14,000 square inches of space were used to cover Presidential candidates. Of this amount, roughly 2% was devoted to independent or third-party candidates and of this figure, less than 1% was about McCarthy in particular.⁴⁵

And such is the fate of those ignored by the Great Mentioner.

In summary, what is perhaps the press' greatest influence on the candidate and his campaign is the role the media play in the nominating process. The media, eager to "leap into print," begin well before the primary period to

speculate upon which candidates are to be taken seriously. The candidates attempt to influence the media's decision by courting them openly in the hopes of gaining increased recognition.

As the primary period begins, candidates scramble for early victories. Such early victories are heavily covered by the media who, after months of speculation, are anxious to report the first "hard news" of the campaign. Victory in these early primaries and caucuses is often more a matter of meeting the expectations set for the candidates by the media than getting the most votes. The wise candidate, therefore, will always avoid over-predicting his chances of success, thereby avoiding a high level of expectations.

The perceived victor of these early primaries, particularly the victor in New Hampshire, is assured both a great deal of coverage as well as predominantly favorable coverage. Throughout the primary period, the winners can consistently expect the most coverage. Such a successful candidate's campaign will benefit from media-generated momentum, and more and more journalists will flock to his press bus. In some cases, a bandwagon effect may occur, greatly enhancing the candidate's chances for nomination.

Finally, those candidates not deemed "serious" by the media are doomed to a low level of coverage throughout the campaign, robbing them of the forum necessary to expound their ideas.

And as the number of primaries continues to increase,

and the primary period becomes longer and longer, the mass media will play an increasingly prominent role in the nominating process.

The Dominance of Horserace Coverage

As noted in the last section, the media tend to "leap into print" with predictions and interpretations, and to place heavy emphasis on the early primaries and caucuses as the first "hard news" of the campaign. These tendencies are merely part of an overall emphasis on horserace coverage. Horserace coverage results from the media's emphasis on journalistic news values rather than political policies and issues. These news values place emphasis on drama, conflict, hoopla, trivia, poll results, and personality. Editor John Lofflin indicates what issues are most important in horserace coverage of a campaign:

The issues we do hear about tend to be issues related to the mechanisms of the campaign itself. Did President Jimmy Carter do as well as he expected to in New Hampshire? Did he do as well as his opponents predicted? Did he do well enough? How much did he campaign? How much did he spend? How do the people seem to be reacting to him as a candidate? Is his staff happy? Are his pollsters happy? Is his wife happy? What is he having for breakfast these days?⁴⁶

Hence, horserace coverage stresses campaign issues, not "substantive" issues of policy or candidate qualifications. The media are widely denounced for this emphasis on horserace over issues, as evidenced by this statement by press critic Ben Bagdikian:

We have a bad habit of reporting politics in this country as though it were a horse race, concentrating on odds, on whether the candidate is

winded or carrying a heavy jockey. But we don't do so well in describing the consequences of the horse race. What will it mean in terms of the way people live? In policy, which is the heart of politics? Are people interested in policy? Yes. If a person is unemployed, he or she is very interested in a candidate's precise way of getting him back to work. If a person is living on a fixed income, he or she is very interested in how a candidate is going to stop inflation. . . .

It is fashionable to picture the average person as being uninterested in policy in general and therefore being somewhat stupid. . . . But almost everyone is interested in policy that affects the things they care about. And that is the weakest part of political reporting.

We have enormous problems that face us today. But our most prominent reporters spend their time describing the acting skills of the candidates.⁴⁷

Reporter James McCartney believes this emphasis on hoopla, trivia, and campaign goings-on, to the detriment of issue coverage, was so dominant in the 1976 election that "junk news" was the result:

The media simply never took "issues" seriously on their own terms. The press, in all of its branches--written and electronic--often would fail to report speeches on serious issues at all, or if it did it would often fail to present them straight: issues, if mentioned at all, would be buried in stories constructed around other subjects--strategy and tactics, evaluations of candidates' momentum, and all of the other kinds of political small talk that arise in any campaign.

These kinds of reports, and this kind of reporting, have now become so much a part of a modern presidential election campaign that a special designation is certainly in order. And one that seems appropriate comes readily to mind: "junk news." Like junk food, it is mass produced, has no flavor, little substance.⁴⁸

Such harsh criticism of journalistic coverage of the presidential campaign is not at all uncommon. It is appropriate to examine some of the research done on presidential elections to determine if such criticism is warranted. Do the media, in reality, put more emphasis on

horserace coverage and "junk news" than on policy, issues, and candidate qualifications? The available evidence indicates that they do.

The landmark study of media effects on presidential campaigns was done in Erie County Pennsylvania in 1940. Researchers Paul Lazarsfeld, Bernard Berelson, and Hazel Gaudet interviewed thousands of residents to determine the effect of the campaign on voter behavior. One of their findings was that the dominant subject on everyone's minds was the race and who was winning. This interest in the race was accentuated by "independent commentators [who] sought to establish themselves as shrewd analysts":

The most talked about subject matter during the campaign was the campaign itself. Over a third of all discussion centered on the progress of the campaign, on the campaign methods of the two parties, and particularly on speculations about the candidates' chances. . . .

The appearance of the election as a contest in which opponents struggle for the advantage derives in part from the emphasis on prognoses dealing with the campaign. On the one hand, the protagonists and their supporters sought to create the illusion of victory-already-won; and on the other hand, the independent commentators sought to establish themselves as shrewd analysts of the progress of the campaign. As a result, the outcome of the election received considerable attention. The developing campaign was discussed and predicted at every stage, just as sports writers speculate about the outcome of the World Series or next Saturday's football game.⁴⁹

If anything, since 1940, the tendency toward horserace coverage and away from public policy coverage has been aggravated by the rise of the mass media campaign. Researcher Doris Graber did a content analysis of nearly 10,000 campaign stories from network television news and 20 daily newspapers during the 1968 and 1972 campaigns. With the exception of

the print press in 1968, in both elections campaign issues (horserace) were stressed over foreign and domestic policy:

In the 1968 [print] press, Social Problems had ranked first, claiming 22 percent of the coverage, followed by Domestic Affairs (21 percent), Campaign Issues (14 percent) and Economic Policy (13 percent). The distribution for television had been quite different and far more typical: 26 percent for the hustle and bustle of Campaign Issues, 19 percent for Domestic Affairs, and 9 percent each for Social Problems and Economic Policy. By 1972, television coverage priorities remained largely unchanged. The press, which had strayed from a similar mold in 1968, returned to it by 1972.

Accordingly, in 1972, following the decline of civil rights violence which had thrust social issues into an unaccustomed limelight, Social Problems dropped to last place for both press and television with 7 percent and 4 percent of coverage, respectively. Campaign Issues rose to their usual first place, constituting 42 percent of the commentary on issues in the press and 60 percent of the commentary on television.⁵⁰

A study done by researchers Patterson and McClure of all network evening news programs during the 1972 general election period produced results similar to Graber's. Again, horserace was emphasized to the detriment of candidate qualifications and major issues. Patterson and McClure found that only one percent of the available news time was devoted to qualifications:

From September 18 to November 6, 1972, the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC were examined for any reference to Nixon's or McGovern's qualifications in twelve important personal and leadership areas: their political experience, the foresight of their political actions, their understanding of average citizens, the clarity of their political intentions, their compassion for the less fortunate, their personal trustworthiness, their personal appeal, their susceptibility to political expediency, their ability to remain in control in various situations, their ability to create confidence in their leadership, their tendency toward extremism in their political proposals, and the strength of their political convictions. . . .

The ABC evening news spent less than twenty minutes on the candidates' personal and leadership qualifications. The CBS evening news carried only sixteen minutes. And the NBC evening news contributed just eight minutes. As a network average, these minutes represent only one percent of available news time⁵¹

In the area of coverage of the candidates' stands on major issues, Patterson and McClure found that the networks allocated only three percent of the available news time during the same period:

From September 18 to November 6, we tabulated every television reference to any of 26 positions the candidates had taken on basic issues, ranging from inflation, welfare, busing, crime, and drugs to withdrawal from Vietnam and amnesty for deserters. . . .

As a network average, only three percent of available news minutes were given to reporting the candidates' stands on the issues. ⁵²

Finally, Patterson and McClure compared the number of minutes each network devoted to horserace coverage (campaign activities) versus issue and candidate-qualification coverage. The results:

Time given to campaign activity (rallies, motorcades, polls, strategies, big labor): ABC, 140:58 minutes; CBS, 121:34 minutes; NBC, 130:20 minutes.

Time given to the candidates' key personal and leadership qualifications for office: ABC, 19:30 minutes, CBS, 16:24 minutes: NBC, 8:05 minutes.

Time given to the candidates' stands on key issues of the election: ABC, 35:19 minutes; CBS, 46:20 minutes; NBC, 26.14 minutes.⁵³

As evidenced by the time figures above, television devoted far more air time to horserace coverage than to issues and candidate qualifications. Patterson's 1976 study, this time examining both print and television, showed a continued media emphasis on horserace coverage. Patterson

analyzed the contents of the evening newscasts of the three major networks, stories in Time and Newsweek, and stories in four daily newspapers (Los Angeles Times, Los Angeles Herald-Examiner, the Erie News, and the Erie Times). The period between 1 January 1976 and 2 November 1976 was studied. The results:

Half or more of the election coverage in each of the news sources dealt with the competition between the candidates. Winning and losing, strategy and logistics, appearances and hoopla were the dominant themes of election news, emphasized most strongly by the television networks, the two Erie newspapers, and the Los Angeles Herald-Examiner; in each of these sources, almost 60 percent of the election coverage was about the game ["Game" being Patterson's term for horserace coverage]. This dimension of the election received slightly less emphasis, about 55 percent of total election coverage, in Time and Newsweek. Of all the news outlets, the Los Angeles Times placed the least emphasis on the contest; still, this aspect of the campaign received 51 percent of its total election coverage.

The election's substance, on the other hand, received only half as much coverage as was accorded the game. The press did not heavily stress the candidates' policy positions, their personal and leadership characteristics, their private and public histories, background information on the election's issues, or group commitments for and by the candidates.⁵⁴

In short, for at least the last three elections, and probably long before that, the media--both broadcast and print--have placed considerably more emphasis on covering the horserace aspects of a campaign than on the election's "substance," as Patterson calls it. It is useful to examine some of the possible reasons or explanations for this emphasis.

One almost self-evident reason for the emphasis on horserace coverage is that, as Patterson explains, the

presidential nominating "race" has grown progressively longer, as noted by the increasing number of primaries:

The capacity of the media's news coverage to constrict and focus voters' attention on the race is enhanced by the structure of the present nominating system. For nearly four months the weekly parade of some 30 primaries [there were 30 in 1976; 36 primaries in 1980] overshadows everything else in people's minds. The scheduling and reporting of the primaries channel voters' attention so completely that they seldom even talk about anything else but the race.⁵⁵

Hence, the increasing number of primaries has resulted in more horserace-type events to cover. Furthermore, while the length of the presidential campaign period is growing increasingly longer, the amount of newsworthy substance on issues remains fixed, resulting, as Patterson notes, in an increasingly larger percentage of horserace coverage over issue coverage:

. . . the length of today's campaign is a reason [for the increase in horserace coverage], but the effect is an indirect one. Because the news is what is different about events of the past 24 hours, the newsworthiness of what a candidate says about public policies is limited. To be specific, once a candidate makes known his position on an issue, further statements concerning that issue decline in news value. . . . The fact is there are not enough major issues for the candidates to keep questions of policy at the top of the news for a full year. They can outline their priorities and positions or take stands on lesser issues, neither of which is considered very newsworthy.

Thus the principle [sic] effect of a longer campaign is to spread a somewhat fixed amount of substance over a greater period of time. Since news outlets now give much more of their election year news space to the campaign, the substance of a presidential election probably gets more news coverage, in absolute terms, than in the past. Still, there is not enough fresh issues and leadership material to satisfy the media organizations' demands for election news for an entire election year. A presidential campaign is considered inherently

newsworthy, deserving of coverage even on those days when nothing terribly new or important happens. On such days particularly, reporters have greater freedom in their choice of news material. Given their general view of election politics and of news, they tend to use this freedom for updates on the players' strategies and standings, rather than reruns of the candidates' policy statements, records backgrounds, and qualifications.⁵⁶

Hence, as the number of primaries increases, and the campaign period lengthens, there is simply more "horserace" than "issues" to cover than in previous elections. This lengthening of the presidential campaign process is discussed in greater detail in Chapter VI. Patterson, in the above statement, also notes another reason for the continuing emphasis on horserace coverage: the reporters, when given a choice, prefer "updates on the players' strategies" to "reruns of . . . policy statements." In short, the political reporter is more interested in the horserace than the issues. Political scientist Donald Matthews explains why:

Traditionally, journalists blame politicians for the lack of attention paid to public policy debates in campaign reporting. . . .

And yet, practically every one of the more than a dozen active [presidential] candidates [in 1976] for the two major party nominations issued a series of "position papers" or "issue statements" early in his campaign. . . . Most of the candidates in 1976 had served in the U.S. Senate for many years where they had repeatedly taken recorded positions on most domestic and foreign policy issues. And candidates . . . talk about political issues at almost every street rally or coffee klatch or businessmen's lunch they attend. These presentations may be long on rhetoric and short on substance but it still can be said that the presidential aspirants talked much more about public policy and issues in 1976 than the media did.

One reason for this is the division of labor with the press corps. The tone and style of presidential campaign reporting tends to be set by reporters who specialize in politics all the time--the Germonds, the

Broders, the Witcovers, the Apples, and their equivalents outside Washington, D.C. Political reporters tend to be fascinated by the process, the mechanics of politics. They are not particularly interested in, or knowledgeable about, policy issues. Issues tend to be covered by other reporters--specialists on economics or foreign policy or what have you--in the relatively large news organizations where full-time political reporters work.⁵⁷

Political reporters do, indeed, seem fascinated by the process, rather than the issues, of the campaign. One such political reporter, columnist Robert Novak, agrees:

Senator McCarthy once said that just as Napoleon felt that every french [sic] soldier had a marshal's baton in his knapsack, every newspaperman has a campaign manager's baton in his briefcase.

I think that people who cover campaigns, particularly those who do it full time, really are not much interested in issues, and they're not very much interested in economics, or strategic questions, or foreign policy, but they sure are interested in the campaign.⁵⁸

Thus, the political reporter's first love is the horserace, the hoopla and the campaign issues, not candidate qualifications and issue stands. Many critics believe that the works of Theodore White, who wrote the Making of the President series starting in 1960, have aggravated this journalistic interest in the horserace and the hoopla. Edwin Diamond notes that ". . . every political reporter had been thoroughly Theodore White-washed by 1972. Reporters worked hard to dig out the color, the scene-setters just as White had done in his narratives."⁵⁹

As Timothy Crouse explains, it took a while for the influence of White's books to be felt, but by the 1972 campaign, the effect on the media of Theodore White's work was widespread:

The reason that 27 million reporters now show

up for every koffee klatsch in New Hampshire has a lot to do with White's first book. . . . It took eight to twelve years for the newspapers to accept White as an institution, but by 1972 most editors were sending off their men with rabid pep talks about the importance of sniffing out inside dope, getting background into the story, finding out what makes the campaign tick, and generally going beyond the old style of campaign reporting.⁶⁰

Reporter James Perry concurs with Edwin Diamond's negative assessment of White's influence, claiming that White has turned political reporters into celebrators of trivia:

The influence of White, I think, has been bad. . . . White showed us [reporters] that a great many fascinating things occur behind the scenes in every campaign. He showed, by his exceptional writing skill, that the story of a campaign can be told in vivid, chronological detail. He made us think that we were missing most of it. And so, I would argue, consciously or unconsciously, we begin to imitate his technique and even, sometimes, his style. We have become nit-pickers, peeking into dusty corners, looking for the squabbles, celebrating the trivia, and leaping to those sweeping, cosmic, melodramatic conclusions and generalities that mark the Teddy White view of American politics. . . .

Thanks to White, our coverage is sometimes out of focus. We are too interested in the kinds of details he treasures. We are too interested in "images." Last but not least, we are far too interested in trying to find out who's going to win.⁶¹

Just as Teddy White's work has increased the political reporters' interests in pursuing horserace techniques of coverage, the increasing emphasis on polling by the media has resulted in more and more polling stories concerning who is winning the horserace. As David Broder notes, the presidential race is a "contest" and, like any contest, people want to know who is ahead:

I think reporting on the [candidates'] standings in a presidential race or any race is an important

component of political reporting. It is a contest, and like any other contest, people want to know who's ahead and who's behind. If you have ways of measuring that, that's legitimate information for the readers to have and that's legitimate news. . . .⁶²

Some critics, however, fear that poll results, while they may be "legitimate news," are over-reported by the media, and that the media will publish any poll that comes along, regardless of how reliable it might be. Pollster Patrick Caddell is one such critic, who commented during a Playboy interview:

PLAYBOY: And yet we seem to get a poll a day in the newspapers, and modern politics seems to be run accordingly.

CADDELL: I long for the days when there were only two national public polls--Gallup and Harris. At least they have a standard for comparison over a long period of time and a record of reliability. The trouble is today, the American press lets the polls set its agenda. It'll quote any poll that comes along.⁶³

In summary, critics blame the media's overemphasis on horserace coverage on factors both beyond their control (the increasing number of primaries and the increasing length of the campaign) and within the journalistic profession (the political reporter's preference for horserace coverage over issues as aggravated by the influence of Theodore White, and the increasing emphasis on "who's ahead" stories based on poll results).

The medium receiving the most intensive criticism for emphasizing the horserace is television. Although the studies discussed earlier show that the print media are also guilty of horserace coverage, it is television that

receives the brunt of the criticism. The Graber and Patterson studies do indicate, however, that while all the media studied showed a preference for horserace coverage, television was the most horserace-oriented medium, and for this reason, the criticism is perhaps not completely unjustified.

Be it justified or not, the criticism has been strong and frequent during the last few presidential elections. Patterson and McClure wrote after the 1972 election:

A presidential election has all the pageantry, color, glamour, and hoopla of the Kentucky Derby. And network television reporting treats a general election exactly like a horse race. . . .

On network television, all presidential campaigns are covered like horse races. The election in 1972 provided a clear test of this determination because it demanded no such coverage--it was never much of a contest at all. Nonetheless, it was made into a sports event with overtones of a soap-opera series.⁶⁴

Similar charges were again leveled after the 1976 campaign. Frank Mankiewicz called the 1976 presidential campaign the "first all-television campaign."⁶⁵ Claiming television reduced the most complex issues to trivia, Mankiewicz said:

Genuine intelligent discussion is "bad television"--talking heads . . . --so the most complex issues are reduced to the trivial level, where they can be presented "visually."

This encouragement of trivia was demonstrated very well through the whole course of the 1976 presidential election.⁶⁶

Reporter James McCartney also levels a blast against television's coverage of the 1976 presidential campaign, claiming it was overly dramatic:

The candidates seldom spoke to issues--because television cannot easily handle issues. What

television can handle, on its ninety-second nightly summaries, is charges and counter-charges, succinct, and simple statements. "President Ford has been brainwashed." "Governor Carter's ideas are dangerous to national security." Television is a medium for drama--artificial or real. It is a medium for political combat.

What we have been seeing is a debasement of the national political dialogue, in which the driving force is the requirements of the nightly, national network news shows. The motivation of the networks is clear enough--to produce drama, to make the news so interesting that people won't turn it off. There has to be a picture, something happening. Anything happening.⁶⁷

Edwin Diamond, writing about television's coverage of the 1980 elections, says that the emphasis on drama, as noted above by McCartney, has become so great that a distorted version of politics--"Warhol Politics"--has resulted:

In the process of producing exciting stories, television has intensified and distorted reality. The campaign on nightly television is something like the replays of football or hockey "highlights" on TV sports reports; we see only the goal-scoring and none of the "dull parts," that is, the rest of the game. Highlights, coverage necessarily concentrates on the candidates as performer, the primaries as horse race, issues as drama.

So we get Warhol Politics--the swift build up, the shooting star of the week . . . the crowning of Kennedy . . . the march of Bush . . . the surge of Anderson . . . and then what seems to be a sudden letdown. In politics, there has been no letdown, of course.⁶⁸

Carl Leubsdorf writes that television has "created a volatility" in politics, and because of this volatility, more stories are required on a daily basis to assess the constantly changing situation. Hence, television coverage aggravates the horserace tendency for all the media:

Television's power to make or break candidates almost overnight has created a volatility in politics that can change the outlook dramatically over a short period. This is often reflected in

public opinion polls that show the standing of a president, or a candidate, bouncing up and down like a yo-yo.

This, in turn, has increased the need for frequent assessments by the press of what is happening in a campaign and has downgraded the importance of daily stories that report what the candidate is saying, even though many newspapers will print them.⁶²

Hence, the media in general, and television in particular, are accused by critics of ignoring or minimizing the substance, or issues, of the campaign and concentrating instead on the horserace and the trivia. That horserace-type stories are the dominant theme of print and television coverage alike has already been shown by the research studies cited earlier. The question is, are the media (or television) primarily to blame for this, as many of the above statements indicate, or do the candidates share in the blame? Again, as with the issue of who is to blame for the increasing number of political media events, both candidates and the media may have a hand in perpetuating the coverage of hoopla, trivia and campaign issues. Jules Witcover, for one, believes the candidates are more to blame than the media:

Press critics never tire of accusing television and newspapers of being distracted from substantive discussion of issues, from the "real" story, by trivial and frivolous incidents. But the fact was, the campaign [in 1976] more times than not was a pitched battle between the candidates' staff aides, laboring to stage events for their own ends, and the media, trying to cut through the propaganda to record the reality. . . . The candidates played hardball, and so did most of the accompanying press; that was what running for President was about. The agenda was always in the hands of the candidates, not the press; if the reporting on the campaign seemed frivolous or irrelevant in comparison to the great problems facing the country, it was usually

because the candidates were frivolous or irrelevant in what they said.⁷⁰

Richard Salant, defending television's political coverage, shares Witcover's views, noting that candidates avoid issue stands in an attempt to be "all things to all people":

. . . if a candidate, as seems to be the fashion these days, insists on being all things to all people and aims for 100% of the votes, he or she will desperately avoid talking about the issues.

I suggest that some of our [television's] failure to report on the issues is due to the fact⁷¹ that the candidates discuss no issues to report on.

The tendency, as noted above by Salant, of candidates to avoid issues is discussed in more detail in the next chapter. Essentially, there is some truth to the argument that candidates avoid issues--at least, those issues which could damage the candidate's chances for election success.

Trying to place the blame for the continuing emphasis on horserace coverage is perhaps as futile an exercise as trying to determine who is responsible for the proliferation of media events. In both cases, Midgley's "reciprocal manipulation" is at work--both candidates and the media have to share the responsibility, or "blame," if that term is preferred.

The reason for the continuing emphasis on horserace coverage over substantive coverage seems to have its roots in the nature of news. As Walter Lippmann noted in 1922, using the example of a labor strike, "overt" occurrences will always take precedence over issues because of

the editor's preference for the "indisputable fact and the easy interest":

If you study the way many a strike is reported in the press, you will find, very often, that the issues are rarely in the headlines, barely in the leading paragraphs, and sometimes not even mentioned anywhere. . . . The routine of the news works that way, with modifications it works that way in regard to political issues and international news as well. The news is an account of overt phases that are interesting, and the pressure on the newspaper to adhere to this routine comes from many sides. It comes from the economy of noting only the stereotyped phase of a situation. It comes from the difficulty of finding journalists who can see what they have not learned to see. . . . It comes from the economic necessity of interesting the reader quickly, and the economic risk involved in not interesting him at all All these difficulties combined make for uncertainty in the editor when there are dangerous issues at stake, and cause him naturally to prefer the indisputable fact and a treatment more readily adapted to the reader's interest. The indisputable fact and the easy interest, are the 'strike itself and the reader's inconvenience.'⁷²

What Lippmann has said, in essence, is that journalistic considerations determine what is "news"--specifically, "overt phases" are more newsworthy than "dangerous issues" because, unlike issues, they are uncontroversial and easily understood by the readers. The same journalistic considerations cited in 1922 by Lippmann are still at work today in determining how political campaigns will be covered. As John Midgley notes, media decisions are based on "journalistic grounds" and not on "grounds of political responsibility," and therein lies the reason why the horserace aspects of a campaign will always be emphasized:

. . . the press . . . is not a part of the political establishment, it is a commercial industry. It has to pay its way. Those decisions about column-inches are normally made neither from a sense of political commitment nor on grounds of political responsibility

but on journalistic grounds, as they should be. . . .

The press cannot afford to substitute, as a general thing, political criteria for journalistic ones in deciding how to use its space, it cannot set out consistently to provide its readers, viewers, and listeners with a service that to all appearances they do not want, while denying them services that to all appearances, they do.⁷³

Hence, journalistic values will almost always supersede political values in determining what will be covered and how, much to the chagrin of some politicians, media critics, and political scientists. And as Midgley notes above, one of the primary journalistic considerations is that the press "has to pay its way" by serving its audience. Frank Mankiewicz makes a similar observation about television in particular, noting that a "commercial bias," not a "political bias," is responsible for determining how political news is reported:

There is a bias of those who own and control television through which the news is filtered, but it is not a political bias, liberal or conservative, radical or establishmentarian. It is a commercial bias. It dictates that out of at least twelve hours of daily programming, the networks will allow only one-half hour to be news--and at the same time require that the news make as strong an effort to get high ratings as the other entertainment programs. That is what distorts the news programs. . . .⁷⁴

Mankiewicz goes on to explain that this commercial emphasis results in "an overriding law--The Trivial Will Always Drive Out the Serious."⁷⁵ Hence, the colorful, dramatic, and visually interesting horserace aspects of the campaign receive the most attention. As Robert MacNeil notes, the competition between media, in this example television, further aggravates the tendency toward horserace coverage:

Television news is growing more competitive and that tends to make it faster, gayer, more active, more sensational, more visually stimulating. What makes political news on television is the fast, tough statement and the pictorially exciting event. Nuance and complexity need not apply. [Which takes us back to Lippmann's "indisputable fact and easy interest."] ⁷⁶

Another journalistic consideration, or value, that explains why horserace coverage predominates is reporting style. Style is certainly affected by commercial interests, as indicated above by MacNeil's description of how competition increases the emphasis on drama and visuals in television news. Patterson, in his 1976 study, makes a similar observation for both television and newsmagazines. These media emphasize the horserace (or "game" as Patterson calls it) because of the interpretive nature of their reporting styles:

The game is made prominent by all media, but it acquires greater prominence on television and in the newsmagazines than in the newspapers. This is attributable to a difference between the typical form of television and magazine stories and the form of most newspaper stories.

In the newspapers, most political reports are simply descriptions of events. . . . The typical newspaper story is probably best described as a string of related facts. . . .

Television and magazine reports, on the other hand, tend to be interpretive in form. . . . television places greater emphasis on the why than on the what, attempting to explain rather than describe. Television's emphasis on interpretation derives from its need for tightly structured stories. In a medium that depends on the spoken word, stories that are to be understood readily by the listening audience must be given a clear focus

For these reasons, most television news stories are built around themes. . . . Quite unlike the newspaper, television's primary concern is not the facts of an event; it is the theme. . . . Description gives way to interpretation.

The newsmagazine depends heavily on interpretation for different reasons. As a weekly rather than a daily news source, its stories often must deal with

several related events rather than a single event. A sequential description of all these events would require considerable news space and probably would not result in the lively presentations that Time and Newsweek strive to attain. . . . Consequently, Time and Newsweek, like the television networks, develop their news stories along narrative lines so that themes, rather than facts, are the most prominent part of their news. . . .

There is no one aspect of the campaign around which television and magazine journalists must build their themes. . . . Consistent with the general tendency of journalists to see the election primarily as a game, however, the dominant themes of television and magazines are the status of the race and the candidates' strategies.⁷⁷

Hence, both commercial and stylistic values intercede in determining what is news, resulting in an emphasis on the horserace. Paul Weaver, like Patterson, sees a stylistic difference in television that results in a "melodramatic" bias rather than a "political bias" affecting television news content:

. . . to understand television news, one must begin by putting out of mind the usual journalism standards, such as fairness, accuracy and balance. The problem with these standards isn't that they don't matter (they do) or that the networks ignored them (they didn't) but rather that they are misleading. They suggest that television news consists of bits and pieces that can be tested one by one for accuracy, partisan tendency, etc. That is rarely the case. For television news is not primarily information but narrative; it does not so much record events as evoke a world. It is governed not by a political bias but by a melodramatic one.⁷⁸

In summary, as Patterson notes: "Increasingly, election news has come to reflect journalistic values rather than political ones."⁷⁹ These journalistic values result in an economic bias and a melodramatic bias in political news coverage, emphasizing horserace and hoopla over substance. Numerous research studies of media content have

verified this emphasis. And these biases in news values, while perhaps more strongly at work in the television and newsmagazine media than in the others, are nevertheless shared by all journalists. They result in a consistent version of the campaign (as horserace) in all media, as Patterson notes:

The public's acceptance of the press's version of the campaign is facilitated by the consistency of coverage by the various news outlets. . . . Print and television journalists alike are mostly concerned with campaign activity and the game, and their shared news values make the same events and subjects the focus of each medium's coverage.⁸⁰

While the media play a key role in perpetuating horserace-type coverage because of their longstanding journalistic values, it is not correct to blame them completely because, as noted earlier in this section, politicians are also to blame. They are not always eager to set a substantive agenda for their campaign because many issues must be handled gingerly or avoided completely to prevent alienating too many voters (see next chapter).

Finally, is horserace coverage really so detrimental to the campaign process? Columnist Jack Germond defends it: "I don't apologize for the horserace school of journalism; I'm an advocate of it It's what we have to do because it's what people want to know first."⁸¹

Others, including James Perry, condemn horserace coverage:

The defense [for horserace coverage] is, you have to try to pick the winners because people want to know. It's your duty. Well, some people do want to know. Campaign consultant Mark Shields wants to know. A couple of bartenders in Georgetown want

to know. Bookies want to know. But nobody else cares.

It becomes a celebration of trivia. We have been heaped with details about Bayh's labor support [1976 campaign] in southwestern New Hampshire, Udall's telephone banks in Wisconsin, the decibel level of Wallace's crowds in Florida.

Every reporter has to make some personal decisions based on how he sees the campaign But it's a mistake to press on from there, to maunder on and on about phone banks, polls that nobody believes, and endless conjecture that nobody really wants to hear.⁸²

Hence, horserace coverage may or may not have some value, and it may or may not be what the audience wants to hear. The only sure thing is that horserace-style coverage has been dominant for years and by all signs will continue to dominate. After the media's role as Great Mentioner, this emphasis on horserace coverage is perhaps the strongest effect the media have on the candidate and his campaign, in that journalistic values, not political values, determine how the campaign is covered. The candidate and his consultant must play up to those values in an attempt to manipulate favorable coverage. Horserace, hoopla and trivia are the result.

The Effects of Media Polling

A third effect of the media on the campaign is the impact of media polls. As noted in the last section, one impact of media polls has been to aggravate the tendency toward horserace coverage. The increasing number of polls has resulted in more and more stories concerning who is ahead. This is not the only impact of media polling on the campaign, however. Before examining these other effects, it

is first necessary to understand the extent to which the media have become involved in the business of conducting and reporting on campaign polls.

As historian Daniel Boorstin notes, the media first became involved in political polling in 1935. Political polling was an outgrowth of market research:

In 1935 market research techniques were applied to politics and public issues. Fortune was the first to publish widely the results of such surveys (conducted under the direction of Elmo Roper and others), and then George Gallup offered his features on a regular syndicated basis to numerous newspapers. Beginning in 1936 "what the polls say" during national campaigns became one of the most interesting and widely featured pieces of news.⁸³

Ever since the 1930s, polls have been an increasingly significant part of the media's coverage of presidential elections. Correspondent Stephen Isaacs notes the increasing use of polling data by the media in the 1972 campaign, adding that the media are becoming increasingly skillful in the use of polls:

. . . the news media in 1972 seem to have made better and more sophisticated use of poll data than ever before. The majority of them seemed to better understand the whole business of survey research, and in general were discreet enough to inform their watchers and readers that polls are just that, and not elections--that they are subject to variables.⁸⁴

The use of polling data by the media and their understanding of polling techniques increased further in the 1976 campaign, as correspondent Philip Meyer explains:

We have come a long way in the reporting of public opinion polls. Eight years ago [1968] . . . , I was able to pile one horrible instance on another in describing how reporters fell for the simplest

traps laid by partisan sources with biased data. The errors then arose from failure to obey traditional journalistic rules of looking behind the offerings of political pitchmen with candidates to sell. . . .

All that has been outgrown now. Reporting of the polls in the 1976 presidential campaign was done for the most part with appropriately informed skepticism. When polls were sponsored by a candidate or his supporters, readers were so informed. . . . When the timing of a poll was relevant to the story at hand, reporters were quick to notice. . . .

What has happened to bring about the change? It is obvious that reporters and editors have done some homework. And one thing that has enabled them to do that homework is their increasing use of--or at least familiarity with--quantitative methods in news gathering. Newspapers from New York to Dubuque have adapted the pollsters' methods for their own information-gathering purposes and have gained new sophistication in the process.⁸⁵

Hence, 1976 saw an increasingly sophisticated use of polling techniques by the media. As Meyer notes above, the media's use of and familiarity with polls helps to offset possible manipulation of the press by the campaign pollsters. This is one beneficial effect of the increase in media polling that will be discussed later in this section.

The 1976 campaign saw not only an increased use of polling by the print media, as indicated above by Meyer, but also an increase in television polls and in jointly sponsored polls. These, in turn, were syndicated to other media outlets, thereby greatly proliferating the number of media polling stories. Professor William E. Bicker explains:

. . . both NBC and CBS thought it worthwhile to establish a link with their colleagues in the print community. In 1976, when the two networks independently determined that they would be carrying out extensive polling operations, they each sought a market for their polls first with the New York Times and then with the

Washington Post.

One of the major reasons for seeking poll outlets in the print media was to allow an outlet for the kinds of stories the networks felt would be impossible to do over a television broadcast. Stories requiring more detailed, step-by-step analysis certainly could be presented by a newspaper or magazine far better than by television. A second advantage to the networks would be to have the prestige of the newspaper or groups of newspapers attached to their poll. For instance, when CBS broadcast a poll, they referred to it as the CBS-New York Times Poll; when the New York Times printed it, they referred to it as the New York Times-CBS Poll. . . . The added prestige of a major newspaper being associated with the polls was perceived as a major benefit to the networks.⁸⁶

There is no doubt that the amount of election polling done by the media has increased tremendously since the first polls of the mid-1930s. As noted in Chapter I by Napolitan and Perry, this emphasis on polls is part of the technology of the new politics. Polling by both candidates and media has become commonplace. As Isaacs notes, media polling is becoming increasingly prominent because it is the only method by which to evaluate the effectiveness of a campaign being conducted in the "living-room" via the mass media:

. . . the jet plane and television have made polling imperative. In earlier days . . . good "seat-of-the-pants" political reporters could cover a presidential campaign by traveling with the candidates by train, say, and getting a feel for how they were doing and how the electorate was responding. Such reporting is impossible now, since the candidates gear their appeals to media markets.

No other way than surveying exists to gauge a campaign's effectiveness as it comes into livingrooms⁸⁷

Some critics, however, do not consider such polling

as necessary or even desirable. Melvyn Bloom believes that the constant polling done during a presidential campaign only serves to destroy the candidate's "political courage" and "potential eloquence":

The effect of such polls on the election of the President and on other of our democratic processes is really a more significant question than the perpetually discussed matter of the scientific accuracy of the surveys. For not every thoughtful citizen would agree that checking and rechecking and publishing and broadcasting the results of small samples of the shifting preferences of the public during the heat of a presidential campaign is necessarily a wise procedure. For there seems to be serious evidence that the results of such polls have done little to raise the level of political campaigning. On the contrary, they have destroyed the political courage and leadership and potential eloquence of more than one presidential campaign.⁸⁸

Other critics of media polling fear that the press has become a newsmaker rather than a news reporter thanks to polling. Furthermore, media tend to push the results of their own polls. Pollster Burns W. Roper of the Roper Organization is one such critic:

Historically the media have reported--or overreported, underreported, or not reported at all--what others have said and done. But it was what others said or did that was their concern. Now that they have gotten into the polling business, they have changed their function. They are now in the position of making news, not merely reporting it. And this presents them with some problems.

As a result of having their own polls, the media have a natural inclination to push their own polls. . . . And this is particularly true when the results of another poll conflict with and raise doubts about the sponsoring medium's own poll. When was the last time an anchorman announced, "Yesterday we reported that our poll showed X. A Gallup poll released today casts serious doubt on the validity of that finding"?⁸⁹

If, as Roper claims, the media do tend to make news with their own polls, and to believe their own polls to the point of minimizing the importance of conflicting polls, then considerable damage could be done to a candidate's campaign. Frank Mankiewicz, in an interview with Isaacs, is one who believes that just such damage was done to the 1972 McGovern campaign. Mankiewicz claims that the published results of such media polls became "self-fulfilling":

The reporters, say Mankiewicz, let the polls do their work for them.

"Every question that McGovern was asked had to do not with what the reporters had discovered but what they'd read in the polls. . . ."

Mankiewicz has particularly harsh words for pollster Daniel Yankelovich, whose findings in sixteen major states were used by Time magazine and the New York Times [sic]. Yankelovich's surveys, declares Mankiewicz, were frequently wrong, and became self-fulfilling. "Yankelovich," says Mankiewicz, "was saying right from the beginning, as Time says, that it must have been very damaging to McGovern to learn that people thought Richard Nixon was more trustworthy. He didn't learn that; he learned that Yankelovich said it. But as far as Time was concerned that meant they did and so that affected all the things they wrote.

"It's self-fulfilling in terms of the people who pay for the polls--Time and the New York Times--by Yankelovich. And their cost accountants tell them that they must act on his findings or it's not worth the money they're paying him. They not only print it, but they analyze the news in terms of the 'truth' of what he says."⁹⁰

As Roper and Mankiewicz have noted, the media must be careful to avoid generating news based on their own poll results, and they must avoid being too subjective concerning the findings of their own polls. Otherwise, a candidate's

campaign may be unjustifiably damaged. Mankiewicz goes on to explain the damage to a campaign that can result from adverse media polls: "They [the media polls] were very damaging to morale . . . in terms of volunteer workers, manning headquarters, getting people out into the street canvassing. They turned people off very early."⁹¹

In addition to lowering morale, adverse media polls can also hurt fund raising.⁹² People are not eager to financially back someone who the polls show is a "loser." Joseph Napolitan describes how media polls hurt Hubert Humphrey's fundraising efforts in 1968:

Nevertheless, published polls can hurt a candidate. In the 1968 presidential election, the published polls hit Hubert Humphrey where it really hurt: in the pocketbook. The September and early October polls that showed Nixon ten to fifteen points ahead dried up Humphrey's money.⁹³

Of course, the above criticism of media polls by Napolitan and Mankiewicz, both of whom were campaign consultants for the candidates whose campaigns they describe, presents only one side of the argument, albeit a valid one. Those in favor of media polling, on the other hand, see such polls as a necessary balance to the extensive and sometimes biased polling done by the consultants. For example, during the same period in the 1968 Humphrey campaign that Napolitan refers to in the example above, Napolitan was conducting his own polls which showed Humphrey much closer to Nixon. These polls were subsequently leaked by the Humphrey campaign to offset the published polls. Some critics felt Napolitan's polls were not entirely above-board.⁹⁴

Philip Meyer describes how media polls can help offset possible manipulation by campaign pollsters:

A few years ago [Meyer is writing in 1976], when polls first became widely used by political candidates, it was feared that the findings would be used for subtle manipulation of the public mood. It now appears that use of polls by news media can inhibit that sort of thing or at least keep it in the open.⁹⁵

In summary, the use of polls by the media is steadily increasing. Polling is now an integral part of the new politics. The effects of media polling on the campaign are varied. Some critics believe media polling is detrimental to the democratic process in general, and to the presidential campaign in particular. Proponents of media polling see it as a necessary balance to the campaign polling being increasingly conducted by the candidates' private pollsters. Without such balancing evidence, the leakage of false or invalid campaign poll results could occur.

In addition to the effect of media polling, this chapter has examined two other areas in which the media affect the campaign process. First, the media play an increasingly important role in the presidential campaign nominating process. Candidates receiving the blessing of the Great Mentioner may be on their way toward nomination. Those whom the Great Mentioner ignores are doomed to obscurity. This is not a one-sided process, of course, for the wise candidate will go to great lengths to attract the Great Mentioner's attention and to secure the necessary perceived victories early in the campaign, thereby assuring

that his candidacy is deemed a "serious" one.

The second area of media influence upon the campaign is the imposition of journalistic news values into the political system, resulting in the dominance of horse-race, hoopla, and trivia over substantive issues and candidate qualifications in the news. Numerous researchers have verified this dominance.

The media, therefore, are more than passive "tools," or conduits, for the candidate's message. Rather they have significant influence on the candidate's campaign, and the candidate, in planning his strategy, must always take this influence into account. The way in which the media interpret and transmit the candidate's message is crucial to the success of the campaign. Equally important, perhaps, are the content and style of that message. To be successful the candidate's message must be a winning combination of imagery and issues.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER IV

THE NATURE OF THE CANDIDATE'S MESSAGE:

IMAGES AND ISSUES

Campaign consultant Joseph Napolitan is quick to point out that campaign strategy really boils down to only three steps:

So far as I am concerned, there are only three steps to winning any election:

First, define the message the candidate is to communicate to the voters.

Second, select the vehicles of communication.

Third, implement the communication process.¹

Discussion thus far has centered primarily on the second and third of Napolitan's steps. In Chapter II in particular, the media tools available to the campaign were examined (step two), as were the various techniques and tactics used by the consultants to implement the campaign's media strategy (step three).

Yet, as Napolitan notes:

The first of these steps is by far the most difficult. . . . Defining precisely what it is that a candidate needs to convey to the people he hopes will nominate or elect him is one of the more difficult jobs in designing a campaign.²

The nature of the candidate's message, therefore, is a vital part of the campaign process, and it will be examined in this chapter. There are essentially two related components to most campaign messages: (1) the candidate's style and personality, or, the term most often used, "image";

and (2) the candidate's position on issues and policies. The candidate's overall campaign message almost invariably includes these two components--he wishes to establish and maintain a favorable public image, and he wishes to propose new policies or take a stand on various issues to gain voter support. These two components are dealt with in the following two sections.

The Image Campaign

Candidates and politicians have long been concerned about the sort of public image they maintain, and long before the rise of the mass media campaign, candidates have done what they could to enhance their images. This often included hiring an image maker, as political scientist Dan Nimmo calls them:

. . . image makers have been around a long time. Mark Hanna, for one, was very much the image maker in 1896, picturing William McKinley on billboards as the "Advance Agent of Prosperity." The portrayal of Teddy Roosevelt as a rough rider, straight shooter, explorer, and man of action was "in large measure, a merchandised, prepackaged image."³

With the rise of the mass media campaign and the campaign consultant, such image making became the purview of the public relations man, and image making began attracting attention. Nimmo continues:

What has helped make Americans acutely conscious of image campaigns in the last two decades is the emergence of professional campaign management as a growth industry coupled with sophisticated exploitation of mass communication in election campaigns. . . .⁴

Indeed, the "image campaign" is an integral part of the modern election, and selecting and communicating a

candidate's desired public image is an important part of the campaign consultant's job. Nimmo describes the aims of the image campaign:

The aims of image campaigns are . . . relatively simple--to make the candidate widely known as a serious contender having accomplished something (usually something outside politics), obtain voters' positive evaluation compared to the opposition, and engage citizens' images of what an ideal candidate should be rather than their traditional partisan or factional loyalties.⁵

In short, the image maker, increasingly a public relations professional, attempts to sell his candidate's image to the voters. That candidates should be concerned with their images is, as Walter Lippmann notes in Public Opinion, almost unavoidable. All "great men," Lippmann explains, have of necessity a public image distinct from their private personality:

Great men, even during their lifetime, are usually known to the public only through a fictitious personality. Hence the modicum of truth in the old saying that no man is a hero to his valet. There is only a modicum of truth, for the valet, and the private secretary, are often immersed in the fiction themselves. Royal personages are, of course, constructed personalities. Whether they themselves believe in their public character, or whether they merely permit the chamberlain to stage-manage it, there are at least two distinct selves, the public and regal self, the private and human.⁶

With the rise of the mass media campaign, the only real change to the process Lippmann describes is that the public relations consultant replaces the chamberlain as the stage manager of the candidates' "constructed personalities." Political scientist Stanley Kelley cites Charles Michelson to describe this image-making process in a campaign:

For Charles Michelson once observed that the people of the United States, in presidential elections, vote for and against nonexistent persons: "They will vote for or against a picture that has been painted for them by protagonists and antagonists in a myriad of publications, a picture that must be either a caricature or an idealization." Except in small constituencies, the candidate can be known personally and directly by an extremely small proportion of the electorate. Like the movie star, he is known primarily through the pictures on screens and billboards, voices from loudspeakers, anecdotes in newspapers and magazines. These are appearances, and, as such, they are subject to certain kinds of manipulation. Like the movie star, the politician has the possibility of becoming a mythical character. In both cases, the myth can be manipulated.⁷

Historian Daniel Boorstin would certainly agree with Kelley that the public image is "subject to certain kinds of manipulation." In fact, he sees such images as almost completely manipulated, or synthesized:

. . . an image . . . is not simply a trademark, a design, a slogan, or an easily remembered picture. It is a studiously crafted personality profile of an individual, institution, corporation, product, or service. It is a value-caricature, shaped in three dimensions, of synthetic materials. Such images in ever increasing numbers have been fabricated and re-enforced by the new techniques of the Graphic Revolution.

When we use the word "image" in this new sense, we plainly confess a distinction between what we see and what is really there, and we express our preferred interest in what is to be seen. Thus an image is a visible public "personality" as distinguished from an inward private "character." "Public" goes with "image" as naturally as with "interest" or "opinion." The overshadowing image, we readily admit, covers up whatever may really be there. By our very use of the term we imply that something can be done to it: the image can always be more or less successfully synthesized, doctored, repaired, refurbished, and improved, quite apart from (though not entirely independent of) the spontaneous original of which the image is a public portrait.⁸

In short, all public figures, including candidates,

of necessity are known to their publics only indirectly through a public image. This image is distinct from the private personality, and as such, it is synthetic and subject to manipulation. Candidates, because of the importance of insuring that this image is a favorable one, will usually not hesitate to employ campaign consultants versed in image making and image manipulation. This tendency has become increasingly prevalent, as both Nimmo and Boorstin have noted, since the development of mass communications. Joe McGinniss, in his book The Selling of the President 1968, was one of the first to expose the extent of such image manipulation in the modern presidential campaign:

"Potential presidents are measured against an ideal that's a combination of leading man, God, father, hero, pope, king, with maybe just a touch of the avenging Furies thrown in," an adviser to Richard Nixon wrote in a memorandum in 1967. Then, perhaps aware that Nixon qualified only as father, he discussed improvements that would have to be made--not upon Nixon himself, but upon the image of him which was received by the voter.

That there is a difference between the individual and his image is human nature. Or American nature, at least. That the difference is exaggerated and exploited electronically is the reason for this book.⁹

It would seem possible that, as image portrayal becomes an increasingly important part of the candidate's message, the attributes of the candidate's image, and the candidate's ability to project that image, would become more important to successful campaigning than real, personal attributes.

Clinton Rossiter outlined a set of "availability" criteria by which to gauge a potential candidate's chances

of becoming a presidential nominee. Included were several important "intangibles" necessary for a candidate to be a "serious contender":

. . . I have purposely left out a number of intangibles [from his list of criteria]--achievement, friendliness, moral repute, presence, eloquence, intelligence, moderation in views and tastes, rapport with the current mood of the country, willingness to serve faithfully . . . --that are obviously factors of decisive importance in transforming men who are merely "available" into serious contenders for nomination.¹⁰

It should be noted that Rossiter's intangible criteria are primarily individual, personal attributes. While these are obviously still important, increasingly, as consultant Melvyn Bloom notes, availability criteria for candidates are becoming public relations oriented:

The public relations man . . . tends to gauge availability by other means [than personal attributes]--for example, measures of the currency of a candidate's name with the public, the success with which he has projected his public personality, the way he performs on television, the attitudes excited by that personality; in other words, his image, actual or potential, and the public's reaction to it.¹¹

What Bloom is saying, in essence, is that the synthetic image has become a more important gauge for determining availability than the candidate's personal attributes, as emphasized by Rossiter. Nimmo concurs with this view:

In screening potential candidates the [public relations] mercenaries have given a new definition to the notion of "availability"; the marketable candidate is selected on the basis of his brand name, his capacity to trigger an emotional response from the electorate, his skill in using mass media, and his ability to "project."¹²

The result of availability based on image rather than personal qualifications can lead, as noted earlier by

McGinniss in his discussion of Richard Nixon in the 1968 campaign, to changing the image, not the man, to improve that availability. Nimmo makes a similar observation, noting that it is not necessary for a candidate to have the appropriate personal qualifications, only that he "act as though" he does:

Candidates vary in the degree to which they possess the reputation, experience, and personal qualities essential to availability. Yet all serious political pretenders must at least act as though they have the necessary attributes. They must convey the illusion of positive characteristics even in the face of less glamorous realities. This means the candidate must select and emphasize the most appealing of his qualities, publicize them widely and repetitiously, and at the same time play down any limitations. The process of selectively publicizing desirable attributes is what professional campaigners term image projection.¹³

It does indeed seem possible that images can be successfully manipulated, or "projected," even to the point of turning shortcomings in personal availability into advantages in image availability. An excellent example is provided by reporter James Perry, who quotes Ronald Reagan's 1966 gubernatorial campaign manager Bill Roberts:

What were some of the public relations problems we [the Reagan campaign] were up against? Well, first, we had a candidate that had no experience for public office whatsoever, against an opponent [Pat Brown] who had 23 years of public office and eight years as Governor. From the beginning we felt that there was nothing to be gained by trying to compete with him on his own level--that is to say, not trying to become more knowledgeable than he was on a given issue. . . .

Our answer to that was to be very candid and honest about it and indicate that Governor Reagan was not a professional politician. He was a citizen politician. Therefore, we had an automatic defense. He didn't have to know all the answers. He didn't have to have the experience. A citizen politician's

not expected to know all of the answers to all of the issues. It was a foundation point from which, on any issue, he could get as bright as he wanted, but he could always retreat to the fact that he was a citizen politician.¹⁴

Hence, by adroit image manipulation, a personal shortcoming in availability (lack of experience) is turned into a plus in image availability (the "citizen politician").

It is not surprising that the increasing employment of such image manipulation techniques by campaign professionals has caused some concern among critics. Boorstin calls availability criteria based on imagery "pseudo-qualifications":

Pseudo-events thus lead to emphasis on pseudo-qualifications. Again the self-fulfilling prophecy. If we test Presidential candidates by their talents on TV quiz performances, we will, of course, choose presidents for precisely these qualifications. In a democracy, reality tends to conform to the pseudo-event. Nature imitates art.¹⁵

Bloom would agree, adding that the difference between the image and the candidate is increasing to the point where there is little resemblance between the two:

We have now reached the point where voters are hardly voting for a real man any more; the image built during the campaign grows farther and farther away from the real human being who is running for office. And when the man is elected, the country, those who voted for him and those who did not, can no longer be reasonably sure of what to expect from the man once he is sitting in the White House.¹⁶

While candidate image-making may be a dangerous development, as Bloom and Boorstin believe, it is certainly one that is here to stay because of the rise of the mass media campaign. The candidate must now project a favorable image of himself to the voter via the media channels. That

the campaign consultant should be involved in, and adept at, such image projection is a natural outgrowth of his public relations and marketing skills. After all, "selling" a candidate's image is not really so different from selling a product--both involve "packaging," as Bloom explains:

. . . from a professional point of view, some of the packaging techniques are similar. Both political campaigns and product promotion involve an effort to gain public acceptance and approval. Furthermore, if the analogy is complete, both involve finding out what people are buying this season and then altering the product to suit their taste.¹⁷

It does indeed seem possible, as Bloom notes above, that the campaign consultant does attempt to find out what "people are buying this season," and to do this he uses the same research tool his counterpart in product promotion uses--the survey:

. . . some [campaign] managers use polls as guides to the images their candidates should present rather than as indicators of what voters think about issues. Professional campaigners, both managers and polling consultants, reason that voters have a vague idea of the qualities they want in a president, governor, mayor, legislator, or other official.¹⁸

The "in season" candidate image in the 1976 presidential election, for example, was what Nimmo calls the "Candid Candidate":

. . . the content of mass advertising and publicity in the 1970s reiterates themes professional image makers regard in vogue--establish the candidate's credibility, accent freshness of appeal, emphasize the qualities of a nonpolitician, and remove from the candidate the stigma of the old politics. If television is the Candid Camera, then professionals in the 1970s provide the Candid Candidate. For example, both former Georgia Governor Jimmy Carter and California Governor Ronald Reagan campaigning in the 1976 New Hampshire primaries emphasized that neither was a Washington politician, nor an insider

of yesteryear; thus having no Washington ties, each would be free to slash waste and bureaucracy.¹⁹

Correspondent Steven Brill noted early in the 1976 campaign that Jimmy Carter was aware of this in-vogue image and had packaged himself accordingly. Brill wrote in March 1976:

The activists want a winner. The rest of the country wants a saint. As a nation we are tired of fighting over issues like Vietnam or busing, fed up with corruption and an economy that won't spring back, and fearful that the humiliation in Vietnam and the energy shortage spell the end of our ability to control the rest of the world. So we yearn for a hero--an honest, sincere, smart, fresh face who can worry about all of these things for us.

Carter seems to understand this better than the other candidates. He more than anyone is convincing people . . . that he is the totally sincere anti-politician they're looking for. . . . Using an image that is a hybrid of honest, simple Abe Lincoln and charming, idealistic John Kennedy, he has packaged himself to take the idol-seekers for a long ride.²⁰

Carter does seem to indicate his awareness of the importance of candidate imagery and personality in an interview with Brill in December 1975:

"You know what McGovern's biggest mistake [in 1972] was?" he [Carter] asked, and continued without waiting for an answer. "He never should have made the Vietnam war an issue." I mentioned that the war might have been one of the issues that gave birth to the McGovern campaign, and not vice versa. Carter stared back blankly and said, "That's not how it works."

Carter says he decided to run for the 1976 Democratic Presidential nomination in September of 1972, when he was less than halfway through his term as governor of Georgia--before the revelations of Watergate, the energy crisis, the fall of South Vietnam, the economic downturn, and most other events that should shape the '76 race. These issues, however, were irrelevant to Carter's decision, because he knew he'd run on personality. So far he hasn't changed his mind.²¹

Carter's emphasis on personality and imagery did seem to be his foremost concern in formulating his campaign strategy.

According to reporter Jules Witcover, the first question Carter's media adviser, Gerald Rafshoon, remembers Carter asking after deciding to enter the 1976 presidential race was: "How do I run? As a farmer, a nonofficeholder? A Georgian? Do you see any negatives there?"²²

While the "Candid Candidate" and "antipolitician" images were in vogue in 1976, the 1980 image has shifted to strong leadership, as Thomas Cronin explains:

As the opening guns sounded in the 1980 presidential race, a yearning for fresh leadership seemed uppermost in the minds of both the people and the candidates. Only four years earlier, in the aftermath of Watergate and Vietnam, people apparently longed for honesty, compassion, and a folksy, common man touch--a touch that Jimmy Carter seemed best able to provide. But as we entered this year's campaign, the demand for "honesty" receded when compared to other qualities sought in the White House.²³

The most sought-after quality, according to a Gallup poll, is strong leadership.²⁴

As Cronin goes on to explain, the reason for this voter concern for strong leadership is in no small part due to Carter's perceived lack of leadership:

. . . pollsters repeatedly found in early and mid-1979 that Americans were dissatisfied with the leadership provided by Jimmy Carter. For example, in July 1979, an overwhelming majority of Americans said they had lost confidence in the brand of presidential leadership they were getting. Nearly three-fourths of those interviewed felt the incumbent "may not have the competence to do the job."²⁵

This observation by Cronin brings up an important point--the campaign images in vogue every four years are based heavily upon the voters' perceptions of the incumbent president. Professional image makers are always alert for

perceived weaknesses in the incumbent which their challenging candidates can capitalize upon. Political scientist David Barber explains:

. . . the incumbent's character--as commonly perceived--has a profound influence on the way his potential challengers are explored. He [the incumbent] tends to define the election's major characterological question. When Ford came in, Nixon's behavior had made the overwhelmingly-salient question "Is he honest?" . . . When Ford went out, his image as honest was intact, but his behavior had raised a different question: "Is he smart?" . . . We jolt through history by action and reaction--Wilsonian uplift, Hardingian ease; Harding corrupt, Coolidge clean; Coolidge sleepy, Hoover vigorous; Hoover stonehearted, Roosevelt compassionate. After the war, Truman the "influence peddler" gives way to square soldier Ike, who eventually looks lazy and is replaced by active Jack, and so on.²⁶

Indeed, the in-vogue images seem to shift every four years, based in part upon the image developed by the incumbent. Image makers, notes Bloom, seem able to "re-package" their candidates to fit the situation:

Interestingly, it seems possible to package, test-market, re-package, the same man several times over. And when the job is finished, the voters will apparently buy a variety of images, even if self-contradictory. Thus, aristocrats like Franklin Delano Roosevelt and John F. Kennedy became "men of the people"; Dwight Eisenhower became a simple, homespun, down-to-earth fellow who simultaneously was a national hero who had the wisdom to "go to Korea" and single-handedly figure out how to resolve a highly complex matter of foreign affairs; Ronald Reagan would make a good governor precisely because he had no relevant experience; Lyndon Johnson was an old-fashioned liberal with an old-fashioned conservative record, and so on.²⁷

While the candidate may be packaged or re-packaged to fit a specific situation, it might also be that, in some cases at least, the candidate cannot maintain such a packaged

image if it is too "phoney." Press critic Ben Bagdikian feels this is what happened to Edmund Muskie in 1972:

One of the major turns in the 1972 presidential election was an unplanned appearance of Edmund Muskie, then a major candidate for the presidential nomination, before the newspaper offices of the Manchester Union Leader in New Hampshire. Muskie denounced the publisher for, among other things, insulting Mrs. Muskie. Muskie at one moment was so angry that he wept. That became national news, making much of the fact that this supposedly unexcitable, sober, Lincoln-like New Englander had broken down and wept. . . .

An important factor that let the New Hampshire episode eliminate Muskie from the race was that he had permitted consultants to build a phoney image of him. Months earlier Muskie had been chosen to reply to a televised speech by then-President Nixon in which Nixon had been abrasive, heavy-handed and contentious. Muskie appeared on television, sitting in a rocking chair in his home in Maine, speaking in sober, impressive and dignified tones. This led his consultants to the decision that they would project the image of Muskie as the totally controlled man able to remain calm in the face of the most trying circumstances. That part was a fake. Muskie has one of the shortest tempers in the United States Senate. . . . When I asked his consultant why he thought the New Hampshire episode was so damaging to Muskie, the consultant said it was because Muskie did not follow instructions. When I suggested that it was because the consultant had built a phoney image, he seemed not to know what I was talking about, as though image-making need have no relationship to reality.²⁸

Hence some candidates are perhaps not able, or willing, to project an image that is too phoney. Equally damaging to the candidate is the result of picking the wrong image. As Jules Witcover notes, Birch Bayh in 1976 was trying to get a presidential nomination using an out-of-season image:

But Bayh's scheme of pushing himself as a "good politician" in a year of antipolitics, first proposed to him by Democratic busybody Alan Baron, had been a disaster. Shortly before the Massachusetts primary, a decision was made to scrap the ads that had Bayh

saying "It takes a good politician to make a good President." Bill Wise began writing some new stuff, but time had run out on his boss.²⁹

In addition to problems caused by pushing a phoney image or a wrong image, presidential candidates can also find themselves in trouble if they try to change their image in the middle of the election. Such a change can be required when the candidate tries to switch strategies (and hence, images) from the primary period to the general election period. According to James Perry, George McGovern faced exactly that dilemma in 1972:

It was, of course, an impossible dilemma for McGovern. He got the nomination because he was antiwar, anti-establishment, and anti-things the way they are. But to win over the other Democratic Party--the [George] Meany and [Richard] Daley party--he had to prove he really didn't mean all those things. Damned if he did, damned if he didn't.

It was my thought then (and my thought now) that McGovern and his advisors erred catastrophically in trying to run as the candidate of both Democratic parties. It was too sweeping a compromise; it was much too political. It was not believable. All it did was disillusion his early followers, and degrade him in the eyes of those who would never become his friends.³⁰

Four years later, Jimmy Carter faced a similar dilemma, and although he made the image transition successfully enough to win the election, his campaign manager, Hamilton Jordan, notes that there was damage done:

Carter was an outsider who had rapidly captured the party nomination, so there was a need for him to establish relationships with elements of the party that he had not known before, like labor. Carter developed a relationship with the AFL-CIO which finally resulted in its enthusiastic support in the last three or four weeks of the campaign. But we paid a price with the independent voters: Carter was a guy who wasn't supposed to owe anybody anything,

but he kept going to see George Meany [president of AFL-CIO], just like politicians have always done. Sometimes the things we had to do over the summer [1976] to bring together the elements of the Democratic party helped us with Democrats but hurt us with independent voters.³¹

Jules Witcover agrees with Jordan, noting that Carter's "inconsistent" image resulting from his shifting from "outsider" in the primaries to the head of the Democratic Party after the nomination was damaging:

Carter was also hurt by the fact that he ran as an outsider in the primaries and then found himself in the general election having to embrace, and being embraced by, all the old Democratic Party hacks. Whenever a candidate appears to be inconsistent with the image he sets for himself he is in trouble. Carter, by invoking the names of all the old party greats, while the Mayor Daleys and lesser Democratic lights were sidling up to him on one public platform after another, compromised his self-description as an outsider going it alone.³²

Candidates, in addition to carefully considering their own image, also take into consideration negative aspects of their opponents' images. This tendency was already noted in the discussion of incumbent images. Taking this a step further, however, candidates not only consider their opponents' images, but also they often will attack an opponent's image, as political scientist Richard Watson explains:

Presidential candidates frequently take their opponents' images into account when shaping their own. In 1964 Lyndon Johnson represented himself as the candidate of moderation, thereby hoping to suggest that Senator Goldwater was an extremist. Gerald Ford portrayed himself as a man of maturity and experience to counteract Carter's emphasis on being a "new face" and an "outsider" to the Washington scene. Besides molding their own images to take account of their opponents', candidates can

directly attack opposition candidates to put them in a bad light with the voters. Accordingly, Gerald Ford described Jimmy Carter: "He wavers, he wanders, he wiggles, he waffles."³³

Ford's 1976 pollster, Robert Teeter, describes how polling was used to determine three "negatives" in Carter's image as perceived by voters. Ford then based his attacks on Carter around these three negatives:

. . . there were three negatives, three things that we decided had to be the areas of attack. For one thing, he was not seen as a man with any record of accomplishment to qualify him to be president; though some people knew he had been governor of Georgia, they had absolutely no idea of what he had done there. For another thing, he was seen as someone who had not been specific enough on the issues for people to make up their minds to vote for him; this developed into the fuzziness question. And third, he was seen as too inexperienced, particularly if you questioned him in the area of foreign affairs . . . these were the areas on which we were basing our plans for the fall campaign.³⁴

Not only do candidates attack each other to capitalize on negatives in their opponents' images, but the media also play an active role in such imagery manipulating. This is discussed further in the final section of this chapter. Suffice it to say here that candidates who are perceived to have negatives because of attacks made on their images by opponents, or because of negative labels attached by the media, are often hard pressed to overcome those negatives.

As Nimmo noted earlier in this section, image campaigning has attracted much attention in recent decades because of the increasing use of professional image makers to exploit the growing channels of mass communications. And

the medium getting by far the most glaring attention is television. The candidates' manipulation of television for image-making purposes, and television's reputed ability to "sell" the candidate's image, have resulted in much speculation and criticism. This speculation and criticism has been evident since television's inception, as this statement by Aldous Huxley indicates--Huxley, writing in 1958, attacks the shallowness of the "candidate-entertainer":

In one way or another, as vigorous he-man or kindly father, the candidate must be glamorous. He must learn to be an entertainer who never bores his audience. Inured to television and radio, that audience is accustomed to being distracted and does not like to be asked to concentrate or make a prolonged intellectual effort. All speeches by the entertainer-candidate must therefore be short and snappy.³⁵

The man who really brought the question of television's image-making capabilities to the public's attention, however, was communications theorist Marshall McLuhan. In his popular 1964 book, Understanding Media, McLuhan discusses how the 1960 presidential campaign debates between John F. Kennedy and Richard Nixon were "a disaster for a sharp intense image like Nixon's, and a boon for the blurry, shaggy texture of Kennedy."³⁶ McLuhan quotes an article from the Toronto Globe and Mail to explain the imagery involved in the debates:

At the end of the debates, Philip Deane of the London Observer explained my idea of the coming TV impact on the election to the Toronto Globe and Mail under the headline of "The Sheriff and the Lawyer," October 15, 1960. It was that TV would prove so

entirely in Kennedy's favor that he would win the election. Without TV, Nixon had it made. Deane, toward the end of his article, wrote:

Now the press has tended to say that Mr. Nixon has been gaining in the last two debates and that he was bad in the first. Professor McLuhan thinks that Mr. Nixon has been sounding progressively more definite; regardless of the value of the Vice-President's views and principles, he has been defending them with too much flourish for the TV medium. Mr. Kennedy's rather sharp responses have been a mistake, but he still presents an image closer to the TV hero, Professor McLuhan says--something like the shy young Sheriff--while Mr. Nixon with his very dary eyes that tend to stare, with his slicker circumlocution, has resembled more the railway lawyer who signs leases that are not in the interests of the folks in the little town.³⁷

So, according to McLuhan, Nixon portrayed a negative television image in 1960. McLuhan cites a Nixon appearance on the "Jack Paar Show" in 1963 as an example of Nixon presenting a new and favorable television image:

On the Jack Paar show for March 8, 1963, Richard Nixon was Paared down and remade into a suitable TV image. It turns out that Mr. Nixon is both a pianist and a composer. With sure tact for the character of the TV medium, Jack Paar brought out this pianoforte side of Mr. Nixon, with excellent effect. Instead of the slick, glib, legal Nixon, we saw the doggedly creative and modest performer. A few timely touches like this would have quite altered the result of the Kennedy-Nixon campaign.³⁸

While many critics were skeptical of McLuhan's belief in television's image-making power, others accepted it wholeheartedly. Public relations and advertising professionals, in particular, took McLuhan seriously--and none more seriously than Richard Nixon's professionals in the 1968 campaign. In fact, during that campaign, William

Gavin, a Nixon speechwriter, circulated a memorandum to the Nixon staff of excerpts from McLuhan's Understanding Media. Gavin adds his own analysis to the memorandum, urging an appeal to the voters via an emotional image rather than logic:

to [sic--lower case throughout passage] the tv-oriented, it's doubly important that we make them like the candidate. they're emotional, unstructured, uncompartmented, direct; there's got to be a straight communication that doesn't get wound through the linear translations of logic. . . .

. . . reason pushes the viewer back, it assaults him, it demands that he agree or disagree; impression can envelop him, invite him in, without making an intellectual demand, or a demand on his intellectual energies. . . . when we argue with him we demand that he make the effort of replying. we seek to engage his intellect, and for most people this is the most difficult work of all. the emotions are more easily roused, closer to the surface, more malleable.³⁹

And so, using McLuhan as a sort of campaign handbook, and keeping McLuhanites such as Gavin on the staff, Nixon launched an image campaign in 1968 based almost solely on television.

Political advertisers were also affected by McLuhan's theories. Advertiser Tony Schwartz is one such self-proclaimed McLuhanite ("In the early sixties I discovered the work of Marshall McLuhan," notes Schwartz in his book The Responsive Chord⁴⁰). Writing in 1973, Schwartz discusses the political use of television in terms very similar to those used above by Gavin. Schwartz, like McLuhan and Gavin, believes emotional, intimate appeals to the voters through the medium of television is the key to success:

A home listener is not interested in a politician who formally expresses a position. To the average voter, expressing-a-position talk is what government officials do when they want to cover up something. A voter wants the candidate to talk to him, not at him; to use the medium not as a large public address system, but rather as a private undress system. Furthermore, many politicians tend to organize their thoughts for a home listener the way they might for a group of lawyers. But the logic of the positions they try to develop fails to impress the typical voter, who has one thought in the back of his mind whenever he listens to a politician: "How do I feel about him?"⁴¹

Nimmo, writing in 1970, discusses this belief, prevalent among many campaign consultants, that images and personality appeals are far more important on television than issues and reason:

Politicians employ numerous techniques to adjust to the demands of video campaigning. These techniques are usually based on an appeal to tastes, rather than convictions, of Americans, for television advisers are convinced that personalities and not issue stands or political parties win votes. The overall ploy is contrived spontaneity, the effort to appear uninhibited, candid, open, and credible without running the risk of an unrehearsed performance. Contrived spontaneity has made idols of ordinary performers--Johnny Carson, Andy Williams, Jerry Lewis, and Dean Martin to name a few; campaigners feel that it also works for them.⁴²

Which returns us full circle to Huxley's comment about "candidate-entertainers" made in 1958. This belief in the power of television as an intimate medium, capable of presenting emotional appeals to the voter through the proper use of candidate imagery and personality, is still much in evidence. The contemporary candidate or politician is very concerned about his television image. Richard Nixon, for example, has certainly not lost his faith in basic McLuhanism. In a televised interview with Barbara

Walters on 8 May 1980, Nixon was asked how he felt 1980 presidential candidate Edward Kennedy would do on the campaign trail. Nixon replied that Kennedy is a "hot figure" whose "voice rasps" on television, and consequently would not do well.⁴³ As Elizabeth Drew notes, Kennedy's advisers verified this concern over the candidate's television style:

Even some of his advisers say that his style did not help; that he came across on television as shouting; that his way of attenuating words, in sarcasm, came across somehow as vaudeville, raising the question of whether he was a serious man, and so did the nervous laugh with which he commented on his [primary] losses on Tuesday nights. According to a number of the people around him, Kennedy is well aware of the shouting problem and has tried to deal with it, but with limited success. He has a big voice, and it had long been a key part of his political style to arouse his audience--sometimes even electrify them--with that voice. But the style did not serve him well on television, which tends to magnify. Kennedy's old-fashioned oratory is ill suited to modern communication.⁴⁴

In summary, the candidate emphasizes personality and imagery as part of his campaign strategy and message. The use of imagery and personality on television is of particular concern to the candidate. The candidate must pick the right image--one that is "in vogue," and one that he can successfully portray. The wise candidate will also attack perceived weaknesses in the opponent's personality and image.

Many candidates and their consultants believe in the ability of the image campaign, particularly as waged in the medium of television, to successfully accomplish the goals pointed out by Nimmo earlier in this chapter--to make the candidate known to and liked by the voters. Indeed,

many critics fear the voters are too readily manipulated by such imagery. As Nimmo notes, however, evaluating the actual impact of the image campaign is not easily done:

There are several problems in assessing the relative success of professional image makers; two are noteworthy. First, as an increasing number of candidates employ professional campaign consultants--for management and coordination, fund raising, polling, grass-roots organization, media time-buying and production, public relations, advertising--the likelihood rises that each major candidate in a race will be involved in image campaigning. In such circumstances, claims that a particular contest was won or lost because a candidate focused on images or issues are difficult to verify. Second, the modern campaign . . . is a multimedia effort that coordinates mass, interpersonal, and organizational communication.⁴⁵

Hence, determining the impact of image making on voters is difficult. Some critics feel that the image campaign's effects are limited. Joe McGinniss, in his description of Richard Nixon's 1968 television-image campaign, notes that the slick Nixon campaign almost failed: "The American people had been presented with the super-candidate, the supercampaign, yet--even faced with the sweating, babbling alternative of Humphrey--they showed signs of discontent."⁴⁶ McGinniss explains why the Nixon image campaign almost failed (McGinniss uses Chapter X in his book The Selling of the President 1968 to explain this near failure, yet most critics stress the initial portion of the book that explains the mechanics of how Nixon "sold" himself and forget to mention how close the attempt came to failing.):

The Nixon image campaign had done all it could within its limits. But its limits were the

man. Richard Nixon. . . .

We had seen the mules in the hot Atlanta street and heard the sobs of children inside the crowded church as they buried Martin Luther King. And watched Bob Kennedy's life spill across the gray hotel kitchen floor, and taken the train ride and seen blackmen cry again, and we had cried with them. And now this Nixon came out of his country clubs which he had worked so hard to make and he waved his credit cards in our face.⁴⁷

Indeed, the 1968 presidential campaign turned out to be a close race by the end of the general election period, yet Hubert Humphrey's media campaign was certainly not as polished as Nixon's. In 1972, a study of television news and advertising by political scientists Patterson and McClure, the same study cited in earlier chapters, revealed that the persuasive ability of the image campaign via television is minimal. Patterson and McClure first take note of the commonly held belief in the power of the televised image campaign--a belief they say is "inaccurate":

Politicians, journalists, academics, and gadflies have argued frequently and passionately that television news and advertising have a wide-ranging influence on voters. Since the medium presents such an intimate look at candidates and campaign events, it has been claimed that television creates the images people have of candidates, presents a particularly authentic picture of politics, and can be used to manipulate unsuspecting voters. Indeed, in most accounts, television is thought to be the most powerful medium available for persuading and communicating with the electorate.

Despite the certitude with which these beliefs are held, they are inaccurate.⁴⁸

Patterson and McClure explain that the image-making efforts of the candidates are for nought:

The final myth exploded by our study is that "images" win more votes than either issues or mere party loyalty. The candidates, cheerfully going along with the networks' horse-race format, believe that

their staged television appearances--every one very much like the others--relay a message to the voter. They think the message is that the candidate's capacity for leadership is mirrored in the crowd's reaction, his character portrayed in the close-ups of his face, his abilities measured by the smiling confidence he projects.

Nevertheless, voter images of the candidates are influenced only marginally by the style and appearance they exhibit in television-news appearances.⁴⁹

Patterson and McClure found that voters tended to see their preferred candidate's image as favorable, and the opponent's image as negative. They asked voters to judge Nixon and McGovern based on seven image dimensions. Voters were questioned both at the start and the end of the general election period.

Among those voters already favoring Nixon, his image improved 35 percent and McGovern's declined 25 percent. For the voters already favoring McGovern, Nixon's image declined 20 percent and McGovern's improved 20 percent.

For uncommitted voters, images of Nixon and McGovern changed very little. Once they made up their minds to support one of the candidates, however, their perceptions of the two candidates' images began to shift in a manner identical to the committed voters. For those who chose McGovern, his image improved by 40 percent and Nixon's declined by 50 percent. For those who chose Nixon, his image improved 35 percent and McGovern's declined by 25 percent.⁵⁰

Patterson and McClure attribute the failure of the televised image campaign to persuade voters to the working of selecting perception:

Among those who are committed to a candidate

because of party or issues, television fails at imagemaking because it cannot overcome this commitment. Imagemaking is trying to persuade the already persuaded. These voters see what they want to see when a candidate appears on TV. "Their" candidate looks good, his opponent looks bad. What is actually televised matters little.

The phenomenon involved here, familiar to psychological researchers, is selective perception. Most people have a biased view of what they see, and their perceptual defenses automatically go up when obvious efforts are made to persuade them.⁵¹

In short, Patterson and McClure found television to be a poor image maker in the 1972 campaign. In 1976, Patterson conducted another, more comprehensive study. The 1972 study was limited to television and to the general election period. In 1976, Patterson examined television, newspapers and news magazines throughout the primary as well as the general election period (see page 195 for more details). Patterson's 1976 findings differed significantly from those of 1972 concerning the impact of the image campaign on the voter. Patterson found that in 1976 television did contribute to the development of the candidate's image:

While television's pictures lack any capacity to enlighten voters about the candidates' policy positions, they certainly contribute to the development of people's images of the candidates. Furthermore, television's limited news space is not an overly severe restriction in the area of image formation. It appears that continued exposure to a candidate, whether on television or the newspaper, encourages the voter to make judgments about a candidate's character. Frequent exposure may provide a sense of familiarity and lead gradually to the formation of ideas about the candidate's personality and leadership. Finally, since early images affect the development of later ones, the concentration of television's impact in the early stages of the campaign adds significance to its contribution.⁵²

The image a candidate portrays in the news does

appear to have some effect on the voters, particularly if the candidate is an unknown with no clearly defined national image, as was the case for Carter in 1976. Patterson explains:

A study of the developing direction of Carter's image . . . readily indicates the effect of news coverage. Initially, news messages about Carter's style, which dominated early coverage of him, were extremely favorable--from the opening primary until the final moment of the conventions, there were more than two favorable news messages about Carter for each unfavorable one. Correspondingly, Carter's early image was extremely positive. In April [1976] voters' impressions of him were highly favorable--69 percent of their thoughts were positive.⁵³

Significantly, not only does the image of the candidate as portrayed in the media have an effect on the voters' perceptions of the candidate, but also, newspapers were found to have a more profound effect on candidate images than does television. Patterson explains:

Newspaper reading particularly contributes to the fullness of people's images Throughout the campaign, heavier readers were more likely to acquire additional impressions of Ford and Carter. Television viewing, in contrast, was associated with these increases only in the early primaries. After this period, infrequent viewers were as likely as regular viewers to acquire additional impressions of the candidate.

The newspaper, then, is more instrumental in the formation of images. Underlying this is the fact that impressions are created mainly by words rather than pictures.⁵⁴

And so, the research to date indicates that the image of a candidate as portrayed in the media may have an effect on the voters' perception of the candidate. Consequently, the image component of the campaign message is an important one. While television may not be the master image-builder some of its advocates believe it to be, it

nevertheless plays a role in image making, at least in the early primaries. Importantly, the print media appear to play a significant role in image making as well. It is probably safe to assume that in the modern mass media campaign, candidate personality and image portrayal will continue to be a key component of the campaign message.

The second important component of the campaign message is the candidate's position on issues and policies.

Issue Manipulation

Perhaps the most commonly heard complaint by critics of the new politics is that, as discussed in the last chapter, horserace coverage dominates over issue (substantive) coverage. This is in no small part due to the imposition of journalistic values into the political process--the journalist considers the race, game, hoopla and trivia more important than policy proposals and position papers.

Many critics are equally quick, however, to blame the politician for this lack of issue emphasis. Specifically, the politician is accused of emphasizing personality and imagery over issues and policy. If the journalist favors horserace coverage, say critics, so too do the politicians--both wish to avoid issues, although for different reasons (the journalist considers them of limited news value while the politician fears alienating voters by taking unpopular issue stands).

This comment by Aldous Huxley is typical: ". . . political principles and plans for specific action have come

to lose most of their importance. The personality of the candidate and the way he is projected by the advertising experts are the things that really matter."⁵⁵

Similarly, Daniel Boorstin berates the increasing emphasis on imagery over ideals in our national politics:

Our national politics has become a competition for images or between images, rather than between ideals. The domination of campaigning by television simply dramatizes this fact. An effective President must be every year more concerned with projecting images of himself. We suffer more every day from the blurriness and the rigidity of our image-thinking.⁵⁶

Ben Bagdikian joins the list of critics by denouncing both the media and the professional consultants for creating an "atmosphere of obfuscation" by emphasizing imagery:

What can the news media do if the candidate will not speak clearly of his plans? If questions are answered only with platitudes and slogans? What if official press conferences increasingly produce glittering generalities and misleading trivia?

One reason this atmosphere of obfuscation grows worse is that the electronic media--radio, television and videotape--reward imagery without information, emotionality without substance, and detached fact without meaning. And as official skill in these areas grows, the news media have failed to find adequate ways of coping.⁵⁷

Adding validity to the critics' accusations that consultants emphasize imagery over issues is the belief expressed by many of the consultants themselves that personality is, indeed, more important than substance. Many consultants feel, as Joseph Napolitan does, that voters are most concerned with the candidate's personality--a personality that is of necessity conveyed to voters through the candidate's public image:

. . . almost without exception, what people want to feel about a candidate is that he is honest and cares about their problems.

Not that he has the same opinion about issues that they do, or the same stands on controversial positions, but that he is honest and he cares. Issues, as a matter of fact, score very low on polls For example, we'll often ask a question something like this:

"Which do you think is the more important quality for a candidate to have--that his position on the major issues is similar to yours, or that he is an honest man who can cope with situations as they arise?"

The results here are overwhelming: invariably voters prefer an honest man who can cope with situations to a candidate whose position on the issues is the same as theirs, and usually by a margin of four or five to one. This kind of information can be dynamite in the hands of a campaign director or media chief, because then he knows that he doesn't have to worry so much about emphasizing his candidate's position, and can concentrate on emphasizing his character.⁵⁸

Political advertiser Tony Schwartz is another believer in personality over issues:

It is qualities like honesty or integrity that tell a voter whether the candidate will be able to handle problems when they arise in the future. Understanding this, the task of a media specialist is not to reveal a candidate's stand on issues, so much as to help communicate those personal qualities of a candidate that are likely to win voters.⁵⁹

A final example from the personality-over-issues school of thought is supplied by Jimmy Carter's pollster, Patrick Caddell, as Elizabeth Drew explains:

Caddell believes that the personal aspects are more important to people than anything else when they make up their minds about the Presidency--that this is a phenomenon that was produced by Johnson and Nixon, and one from which Ford was the first to benefit--and that the impact of the issues is minuscule. "Character will always be first," Caddell said⁶⁰

Hence, there is a rather widely held belief that personality, not issues, decides elections. Comments by

image makers such as those just cited reinforce this belief. Yet, in listing the two components of the candidate's message, the candidate's position on issues and policies was cited as one of those components. This is because, comments by some critics and campaign professionals notwithstanding, the wise candidate does not emphasize the image campaign to the exclusion of issues. Dan Nimmo explains why:

One might assume that campaigners faced with a widespread indifference to issues would avoid emphasizing issues in their strategy considerations. The opposite, however, is the case; campaigners like to run "on the issues." A candidate can do relatively little about the distribution of partisanship in his campaign, but he can maneuver by articulating issues that strengthen his hand.⁶¹ He has at least partial control over the issues.

As Nimmo indicates, issues are not ignored by the wise campaigner--they are manipulated. As journalism professor George Reedy notes, "Issues are to political campaigns what a football is to a football game."⁶² Issues are something the candidate uses to his advantage. Political scientist Stanley Kelley agrees with Nimmo and Reedy:

Public relations politics is issue politics: parking tickets cannot be fixed by newspaper, radio, or television. Issues are weapons and must be managed as such. Though this does not mean that the public relations man is free to choose only those issues that suit his purposes, it does mean that he has certain criteria which guide him in their selection, delineation, and the stress he gives them.⁶³

Patterson and McClure note that voters are responsive to issues, and that issues can be used successfully by the candidate as long as he is smart enough not to take issue stands that are unpopular and "poorly conceived":

What does it gain a candidate, however, to build

his media campaign around issues, his group commitments, and his personal and political history? George McGovern and Barry Goldwater tried that, and they lost nearly every state in the Union. So conventional wisdom suggests that speaking too loudly and too clearly on the issues is a strategy for defeat.

But observers have misinterpreted these ruinous candidacies and have ignored other evidence--that the electorate is becoming increasingly responsive to issues. This same research would say that the candidacies of Goldwater and McGovern fell apart, not because issues were prominent, but because many of their issues proposals were poorly conceived and totally unwanted by overwhelming majorities of voters. The proper lesson from the Goldwater and McGovern defeats is not that issues make poor propaganda but that, because voters are increasingly concerned about issues, a candidate who advocates what most voters oppose is in serious trouble.⁶⁴

And so, issues are an important component of the candidate's message--as long as they are properly manipulated. Indeed, it is not even necessary that the issue proposed be of any value except for political purposes. For example, professional consultant David Keene mentioned at a New York Times conference in November 1979, held to discuss Carter's chances for reelection in 1980, that Carter should propose wage and price controls simply as a political expedient:

David Keene, for one, thinks the time is right for a dramatic move against inflation. "I'd put in wage and price controls," said the [George] Bush strategist. "They don't work, but Democrats like them. And we're not talking economics, about whether they deal with causes or symptoms. As far as the public is concerned, they could work politically for the President, and there's something [Edward] Kennedy couldn't criticize."⁶⁵

While the above example may be an extreme case of issue manipulation, the point of using issues for political gain is well taken. As Melvyn Bloom explains, the candidate

seeking maximum political mileage out of his issue stands must insure that he picks the right issues, does not pick too many, keeps his position on them fairly simple, and then weaves them together into a unified theme for the media to present to the voters:

Issues are often, for the [public relations] practitioner, an approach to a theme--a unifying thread which runs through the campaign. A review of presidential campaigns since 1952 indicates a consistent tendency to choose three or four issues and pound away at them for the duration. . . .

Issues, once selected, tend to be put in rather simple terms and are repeated as frequently as possible in precisely the same terms, much as an advertising slogan for a commercial product.⁶⁶

In simplifying and distilling complicated issues into short, easy-to-understand themes, campaign consultants are merely following the advice of Edward Bernays, who notes that "heavy" facts will be ignored by the public:

He [the public relations counsel] must make it easy for the public to pick his issue out of the great mass of material. He must be able to overcome what has been called "the tendency on the part of public attention to 'flicker' and 'relax.'" He must do for the public mind what the newspaper, with its headlines, accomplishes for its readers.

Abstract discussions and heavy facts are the groundwork of his involved theory, or analysis, but they cannot be given to the public until they are simplified and dramatized.⁶⁷

As Kelley notes below, the efforts of the campaign management firm of Whitaker and Baxter took into consideration Bernays' advice dating from 1923. Whitaker and Baxter believe in the simple, clear, and brief issue statement,

both to the media and to the voter:

A sensitive appreciation of the limitations and potentialities of the media they use is an important determinant of the way Whitaker and Baxter treat issues. In the mass media of communication one may expect to be heard and read but cannot reasonably expect to be heard or read very long. As a result issues become distilled into themes or slogans. "Every minister," says Baxter, "preaches from a text--and every campaign, if it is a successful campaign, has to have a theme!" She adds, "The theme . . . should have simplicity and clarity. Most of all, it must high-point the major issues of the campaign with great brevity--in language that paints a picture understandable to people in all circumstances."⁶⁸

As Leona Baxter's partner (and husband) Clem Whitaker puts it: "It was Patrick Henry who said, 'Give me liberty or give me death.' That's what we call laying it on with a ladle. . . . Even in these modern times [the 1950s], that is the kind of dynamic sloganeering that molds public opinion and wins campaigns."⁶⁹

And so the first rule of issue manipulation is to keep the issues brief, simple, dramatic, and oriented to the desires of the public. If this is properly done, as Walter Lippmann noted in 1922, then the candidate need not even bother to explain how he intends to implement his policies:

When political parties or newspapers declare for Americanism, Progressivism, Law and Order, Justice, Humanity, they hope to amalgamate the emotion of conflicting factions which would surely divide, if, instead of these symbols, they were invited to discuss a specific program. For when a coalition around the symbol has been effected, feeling flows toward conformity under the symbol rather than toward critical scrutiny of the measures.⁷⁰

Thus, the successful issue manipulator keeps his

issues and policies brief, simple to the point of being thematic, and deliberately vague--specifics are not necessary. In fact, they can alienate potential supporters. This tendency toward generality is not a new phenomenon, as the results of the 1940 Erie County study indicate:

In addition to talking about the goals and results of their policies, the [presidential] candidates and their spokesmen had to say something about the methods by which their policies, or their opponents' policies, would be realized. Actually, not much was said. Only 14% of the total material contained references to methods, and that was often either irrelevant or vague. In other words, there was little inclination on either side to intrude much discussion of how their programs would be realized upon the more desirable (and less controversial) discussion of the attractive programs themselves.⁷¹

As Richard Watson notes below, there are more recent examples of how presidential candidates have avoided discussing the specifics of implementing their broad policies:

Not only are issues usually framed in general terms in presidential campaigns but few concrete suggestions are made for handling them. Thus, in 1960, Kennedy urged that he be given the chance to "get the nation moving again," but he was very vague about what, specifically, he would do to move the nation forward. Nixon was even more indefinite in 1968; he refused to spell out his plans for dealing with the major American political issue, Vietnam. His excuse was that if he did so, he might jeopardize the Paris peace talks that were then being held.⁷²

Thomas Patterson found in his study of the 1976 presidential campaign that the practice of stressing vague, broad policy with little discussion of specific implementation is still much in evidence. Patterson calls such broad policies "diffuse issues":

. . . candidates prefer what can be called diffuse issues. These diffuse issues include broad policy proposals where the candidates' appeals differ mostly in style and emphasis, as in the common commitment to maintain a healthy economy. Addressing the problem, one candidate may stress it more than another or have a somewhat different set of proposed solutions, but both agree on the goal. Except in emphasis, the candidates' spoken statements on these issues are usually so general (such as, "It's time to get the economy moving again,") as not to distinguish one candidate from another. The candidates' detailed proposals for handling such issues are usually found in position papers or one-time-only speeches, but even these do not produce ready distinctions between the candidates, for their proposals often overlap substantially and frequently differ primarily on intricate points.⁷³

Patterson goes on to explain the reasons for this preference for "diffuse issues," and these preferences indicate the manipulative use of such issues: (1) broad appeals pose little risk, and few voters will find them objectionable; (2) such diffuse issue stands are necessary for building a broad party coalition.⁷⁴

Hence, in issue manipulation, the candidate avoids specifics, preferring instead the diffuse issues around which he can build a coalition of support. This is the nature of American presidential campaign policies and, as Jules Witcover explains, issue stands on specifics can only hurt the candidate's chances:

Like their counterpart power-wielders in the Republican Party, the conservatives who consider that their party should be the vehicle for communicating the True Faith, liberal Democrats also hold that such ideological purism is the route to political success: the winner must offer a choice, not an echo--in the phrase popularized, and proved so fallible in Goldwater's campaign of 1964. That approach, appealing to those who believe elections are won on issues and that they are demonstrably right on issues, would have more validity in a politically polarized country. Then, the voter

would be obliged to make clear-cut choices. But in the real world of grays, of shadows and overlaps and contradictions, the candidate who can seem not all things to all men, but most to most, is the likely winner. Thus, in each major party, the cagey aspirant for the presidential nomination must try to appeal to, or at least mollify, the ideologues who are the most energetic and often the most influential in nomination politics, taking care not to paint himself into a corner from which he cannot escape in the general-election campaign among an electorate of non-ideologues.⁷⁵

This description by Witcover points out an important corollary to issue manipulation: the wise candidate does not "paint himself into a corner," and this means that not only must his policies and issue statements remain broad, but also potentially harmful issues must be avoided. Consultant Paul Theis so recommends:

An additional point on issues: Don't let the candidate get forced into the middle of an unpopular issue. One of the greatest fallacies in campaigning is that a candidate has to take a position on everything that comes down the road.⁷⁶

The wise candidate chooses only "safe" issues or policies upon which to take a stand. A stand on some issues, such as abortion, is almost guaranteed to alienate a large portion of the voters. Congressmen and senators running for the presidency provide a good example of how certain issues can damage a candidate's chances for election. Edward Kennedy's seventeen years in the Senate, for instance, might do him more harm than good in the 1980 campaign:

Edward Kennedy has spent relatively little time in the Senate since his Nov. 7 [1979] declaration of candidacy, but he often has found that votes during his 17 years in the Senate have returned to haunt his campaign. For example, Carter supporters scored points when they found that Kennedy voted against a federal tax credit for home

weatherization (Kennedy prefers direct grants and has criticized tax expenditures), against financing the Trident submarine several years ago, and for a bill calling for registration of rifles. Kennedy aides have been frustrated by Carter's ability to overcome his own apparent switches on key issues, such as oil price decontrol and nuclear power development.⁷⁷

It is not surprising that Kennedy's aides should be frustrated over Carter's issue stands, since Carter is, after all, the master of issue manipulation. Jules Witcover described Carter's ability to maneuver around the issues during the 1976 campaign:

Carter's handling of the abortion issue in Iowa [before the caucuses] was a signal of things to come. He would display a talent for being on two sides of an issue that both dismayed and frustrated his opponents. In a political society accustomed to having its leading figures neatly compartmentalized as liberals and conservatives, Carter defied such categorizing. Why should a candidate be liberal or conservative down the line, he argued, when most of the American people were not? In his intensifying battle with the media over his unwillingness to be pigeonholed or, indeed, pinned down on any detail concerning his major proposals, he dismissed the insistence on clear-cut responses by saying that reporters asked him "frivolous" questions that the public really didn't care about.⁷⁸

Carter was, indeed, able to be most things to most people in the 1976 campaign, and his ability to manipulate issues had a great deal to do with this. Carter's success at the issues game is clearly demonstrated by the results of a CBS-New York Times election day poll; Jonathan Moore, director of the Institute of Politics in Cambridge, Massachusetts, describes this Carter phenomenon:

I can remember a telephone call from pollster and political analyst Walter DeVries, shortly before the [1976] North Carolina primary, to report that

the self-identified Carter supporters he had just interviewed there split into thirds when asked whether they planned to vote for him because he was liberal, moderate, or conservative; Carter's candidacy never lost this characteristic. A CBS-New York Times election day poll reported the voters' perceptions of Carter along ideological lines as liberal 32 percent, moderate 30 percent, conservative 19 percent.⁷⁹

And so, as typified by Carter's 1976 campaign, the presidential candidate who can identify a few key (safe) issues, take a simplified, generalized stand on those issues, and simultaneously avoid unsafe issues is the one most likely to rally the broadest possible support from within his party and among the voters.

One key question remains: how does the candidate know which issues or policies are important and safe, and which are inconsequential or unsafe? The campaign consultant, specifically the campaign pollster, can be of valuable service in this decision-making process. The importance of polling to identify public trends and beliefs has long been recognized in the public relations profession. Edward Bernays wrote in 1923:

Of course, the public relations counsel employs all those practical means of gauging the public mind which modern advertising has developed and uses. He employs the research campaign, the symposium, the survey of a particular group or of a particular state of mind as a further aid, and confirmation or modification of his own appraisals and judgments.⁸⁰

In the last section, the use of campaign polls to determine the appropriate candidate image was discussed. Another important function of campaign polling is to determine which issues are most relevant to the voters and how

they feel those issues should be resolved. Indeed, as Joseph Napolitan notes, running a modern campaign without polling input is like sailing "the Atlantic without a compass":

Defining the message the candidate should communicate to voters is critical to the success of the campaign. This is where a poll is invaluable.

I personally would no more try to run a campaign without adequate polls than I would try to sail the Atlantic without a compass. And this is not to say that a candidate should examine the results of a poll, see what the voters want, and then go out and promise them that. It's not so simple.

Ordinarily a candidate will have ten or fifteen ideas for programs. This is too many to effectively utilize in a campaign. To use so many dilutes the message of the candidate and causes some confusion in the minds of voters.

It is much better to narrow the issues on which you wish to campaign to a manageable number, say four or five, and concentrate on those. A poll can help a candidate establish a list of priorities. If he is contemplating fifteen issues, and the poll shows that voters strongly favor five, then it takes no special genius to recognize that the five the voters favor are the ones the candidate should emphasize.

Sometimes a candidate learns that an issue he favors is opposed by the voters. We never tell a candidate to change his principles as the result of a poll--but we often suggest that he de-emphasize one position and put greater emphasis on another.⁸¹

Napolitan indicates above that the candidate does not simply "see what the voters want, and then go out and promise them that," but critics of campaign polling, such as Melvyn Bloom, are not so sure this is the case:

It is worth underlining again the assumption implicit in Napolitan's comments about polls--an assumption which we suspect is so banal to the campaign consultant fraternity as to have already passed beyond the pale of serious discussion. This is the automatic procedure whereby a candidate determines the issues which he will discuss and the positions he will take on the basis of what the polls indicate the voters want to hear.

A further assumption is that a candidate is

courting disaster should he decide to fly in the face of such data and set his campaign priorities on what he believes to be important.⁸²

Whether the candidate determines his issue positions after the polls, as Bloom charges, or whether the candidate merely uses poll results to shift priorities in his previously held beliefs, as Napolitan claims, is perhaps an ethical matter best left to the individual candidates and consultants. One thing is certain, however. Polls play an important part in issue manipulation. Examples of poll results used to affect issues and policies abound. One such example is provided by Ronald Reagan's 1976 campaign, as recounted by William Lanouette:

On Feb. 25, 1976, the day after the New Hampshire primary, Ronald Reagan was in trouble. President Ford had just beaten him by 1,480 votes in a see-saw race that Reagan considered essential for starting his drive toward the Republican presidential nomination.

"We had to find an issue that would contrast, as sharply as possible, the leadership differences of Reagan and Ford," Richard Wirthlin, Reagan's pollster, recalled recently. "Our polls in Florida [where a primary was then 13 days away] showed us that the perceived difference between Reagan and Ford was most clear on foreign policy."

So Reagan began hammering Ford on such issues as the Panama Canal treaties and detente with the Soviet Union. Although he lost in Florida, his popularity began rising. "We used the same strategy with a vengeance in North Carolina, Texas, Indiana and Nebraska--which Reagan won handily," Wirthlin said. "We had hit pay dirt."⁸³

Because of success stories such as the one above, candidates are placing increasing emphasis on polling. Consequently the pollster, one of the many varieties of campaign consultants available to the candidate, is becoming an increasingly important figure, thereby conforming to the overall

trend--the rise of the campaign consultant. And the pollster, as Carter's Patrick Caddell notes, increasingly wants to play a strategy role;

PLAYBOY: You [Caddell] are in the unique position of being not only the President's pollster but also one of his closest advisors. How do you like to be referred to?

CADDELL: Well, pollster is not my warmest word. Statistics can't mean anything unless you know how to interpret them. I was in politics before I got into public-opinion surveys. I would hope to be remembered for something more than just providing the President with some numbers.⁸⁴

Every major candidate in the 1980 presidential race is retaining a pollster, and their campaign polls provide a basis for decisions on images and issues.⁸⁵

At the start of this section, it was noted that many critics feel the personality and image of the candidate's message is crucial, to the exclusion of the second component of the candidate's message, his stands on issues and policies. Clearly, both components are important, and inevitably the candidate's message takes both components into consideration. While both components are important, however, it is possible that, in any one election year, one component may be more significant than the other. For example, as Moore notes, personality played a more important role in the 1976 presidential campaign than did issue manipulation:

William Loeb's Manchester [New Hampshire] Union Leader's headline the day after the [general] election was: "Shifty Beats Stupid." Clearly, partisan numbers, general public mood, and personality played a greater role in the outcome than did clearly differentiated preferences on issues either on the part of the candidates or the voters.⁸⁶

John Deardourff, Ford's 1976 media consultant, agrees that personality was the key component in the 1976 campaign, unlike the 1972 campaign, in which issues were important. Also, Watergate brought the candidates' personalities under closer scrutiny in 1976:

In 1972 Nixon had won largely because voters believed that he was correct on issues or because they found McGovern's position on issues unacceptable. Then it was suddenly revealed that Nixon had incredible character flaws, and the fact that he was correct on issues had no meaning. As we began to think about 1976, our great concern was that we present the president [Ford] as a man who could be trusted, who was all of the things that Nixon was not.⁸⁷

Coupled with the emphasis on candidate personality as a result of Watergate was the lack of major substantive issues in 1976, as Edwin Diamond explains:

The candidates' strategists came to the conclusion early in their campaign that in 1976 the voter's presidential choice would turn on perceptions of character. No major substantive issues--as civil rights or the war in Vietnam had in the 1960's--divided the candidates. The question posed to the voters in 1976 was, in effect, who is best able to restore confidence in government and faith in the American way after the terrible events of Watergate, the excesses of the CIA and the FBI, Vietnam, and civil disorder.⁸⁸

Hence, as shown by the 1976 campaign, the balance between the personality (image) component and the issue-manipulation component in the candidate's message may not always be equal, but both components nevertheless play an important role.

The candidates' messages, as influenced by campaign polls and formulated by the candidates' media experts, do not always reach the voters in exactly the polished version

desired by the candidates. This occurs for the obvious reason that the public media are more than passive conduits for campaign messages. Despite the significant efforts made by campaign consultants to manipulate the media content (as discussed in Chapter II), the media nevertheless play an active role in interpreting and presenting the candidate and his message to the voters. The media's effect on the two components of the campaign message--imagery and issue manipulation--is discussed briefly in the next section.

The Media's Effect on the Candidate's Message

Just as the candidate seeks to present a favorable public image, or personality, for consumption by the voters, so too do the media seek to portray to the public the press' conception of the candidate's image and personality. These two versions of the candidate's image do not always coincide. The media, in an effort to give the voters a simplified version of the candidate's personality, often attach attributes, or "labels," to the candidates, as Edwin Diamond explains:

When [presidential] primary politics are handicapped like prize fights or horse races, the various runners must have sporty names, labels to characterize the candidates, to give the journalist and, by extension, his or her readers, a handle on the candidate.⁸⁹

As might be imagined, the image of the candidate as evoked by journalistic labels does not always coincide with the favorable image the candidate is trying to present. Diamond discusses such labeling in the 1976 campaign in which not all the labels were particularly flattering:

. . . there is much to be said for extended exposure in the media or politicians themselves. For the past six months [late 1975 and early 1976] some of us in the News Study Group at M.I.T. [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] have been looking at the appearances of the presidential candidates in such diverse television formats as news conferences, talk shows, and panels such as Meet the Press, Face the Nation, and Issues and Answers (as well as appearances on the network evening news shows). We found a certain pattern developing: newspaper and magazine articles and television news coverage quickly tends to pin a label on the candidates ("The Populist," "The Gunslinger," "The Can't-Win Candidate," and, in the extreme, "President Klutzy").⁹⁰

As political scientist F. Christopher Arterton notes, such negative labels can be difficult to overcome: "Candidates find it difficult to combat labels or images which slowly become affixed to their policy stands ('radical,' 'conservative,' 'fuzzy,') or their personalities ('dull,' 'vindictive,' 'lightweight')." ⁹¹ The truth of this is best exemplified by the difficulty Gerald Ford had in overcoming negative labels in 1976, as Witcover explains:

At first, his [Ford's] hominess, his old-shoe quality, was charming, endearing, especially in a man they [the press] felt they could trust. But as he floundered in office, his folksiness came to be a kind of trademark for bumbling good intentions. The old Lyndon Johnson gag that "Jerry Ford can't chew gum and walk at the same time" did not die easily; in fact, it flourished against a backdrop of repeated personal pratfalls, until an image sometimes approaching buffoonry, or oafishness, attached itself to the man. . . . His mispronunciation of words was commonplace; some in the White House press corps dubbed him "President Turkey," and accused him of "trying to sew up the klutzy vote."

. . . All this was good for laughs, but in time it was no longer a laughing matter. In politics, perception counts for as much as reality, sometimes more; what a public official is to the voter is more often than not what he seems to be. That is why so much emphasis is placed on public image, and why so often a sow's ear can be sold as a silk purse. But the negative also works; a negative perception can

take hold, and politicians especially have always been vulnerable to the dangers of negative public perception. Often a single episode will be seized on by the press and public to epitomize all the reasons people have disliked someone, until it becomes a kind of trademark.⁹²

Obviously, the press is not solely responsible for such negative labels. The candidate often says or does something that helps bring the negative label to the fore. Also, candidates are always looking for negative labels to hang on their opponents. Another example of negative labeling in the 1976 campaign was the charge leveled against Jimmy Carter by press and opponents alike that he was "fuzzy" on the issues. (The charge undoubtedly had some validity, but once the label was attached, it became nearly unshakable, regardless of what Carter did.) Political scientist Donald Matthews explains:

As the press began to look closely at Jimmy Carter's issue positions--and given his early successes, this came early in 1976--they were confronted with unusual complexity and ambiguity. . . . He [Carter] sought to avoid being stereotyped into traditional political categories. . . . The Wall Street Journal on February 23, 1976, eloquently stated the press' confusion when it referred to Carter after New Hampshire as "a moderately liberal conservative."

Carter's approach to issues drove many a reporter up the wall. Attacks on Carter's "fuzziness" became a central theme of the campaign--begun by the press, then picked up and used by his opponents. One of the advantages of the charge was its own imprecision--it could mean duplicity, vagueness, lying, ambiguity, inconsistency, dishonesty, and more. The "fuzziness" of the "fuzziness story" made it difficult to answer.⁹³

Hence, the media play an active, independent role in creating the candidate's public image. The Carter "fuzziness" example above also illustrates a second media effect

on the candidate's message: Carter received the "fuzziness" label in the first place because of a basic difference between what the media and the candidate consider an important issue.

As discussed in the last section on issue manipulation, the candidate prefers broad, safe issues--what Patterson calls "diffuse issues." The media have a different attitude toward issues, however, and this attitude affects the way in which the media report on issues.

In Chapter III it was noted that the media prefer campaign issues (horserace coverage) to substantive issues. This does not mean, however, that substantive issues are ignored. The media do cover issues, but the sort of issues they prefer are not diffuse issues, but "clear-cut issues," as Patterson notes:

The press has a liking for . . . clear-cut issues. These are issues that, above all, neatly divide the candidates. Preferably, they also produce disagreement and argument among the candidates; rest on principle rather than complex details or relationships; and can be stated in simple terms, usually by reference to a shorthand label such as busing or detente.

The press's bias toward clear-cut issues stems from a number of influences. Such issues often provoke conflict and controversy among both candidates and voters, thus providing colorful copy as well as a ready audience. But the major reason for the press' interest probably owes to its patterned view of events, an outlook best described by James David Barber. "The first fact of journalistic life," he writes, is that reporters "tend to notice those aspects of the situation that lend themselves to storymaking." Stories begin with the intersection of contrasts. "The reporter's raw material is differences--between what was and what is, expectations and events, reputations and realities, normal and exotic--and his artful eye is set the moment when the flow of history knocks two differences together." Thus the issues that tidily separate the candidates are preferred to those on which the candidates agree or on which the differences are imprecise.⁹⁴

Given the vastly different attitudes toward issues held by the media and the candidate, it is small wonder that Carter's issue manipulating during the 1976 campaign drew criticism from the press, resulting in the "fuzziness" label. Patterson's findings from the 1976 campaign show clearly that the media prefer (and hence, report on) clear-cut issues, while the candidates prefer (and hence, emphasize) diffuse issues:

That reporters and candidates have different issue biases can be seen in part when issue news initiated by reporters is compared with that initiated by candidates. In daily news coverage, clear-cut issues accounted for only 40 percent of the issue references where a candidate was the initiator (such as, "Ford called a press conference today to discuss . . . "), while accounting for nearly 80 percent of those where a journalist was the initiator (such as, "Carter was asked by a reporter today about . . . ").⁹⁵

Patterson goes on to analyze news stories versus candidate-controlled messages (convention speeches and advertising).⁹⁶ His findings concerning preferences for clear-cut versus diffuse issues are similar to the findings cited above.

In summary, the media are more than passive conveyors of candidate messages. Media content in the component areas of both imagery and issues reflect media news preferences as well as candidate preferences.

This chapter has examined the nature of the candidate's message. This message consists of two components: (1) the candidate's desire to portray a favorable personality via his public image; and (2) the candidate's desire to attract party and voter support based on his

stand on key diffuse issues and policies. The candidate's portrayal of a favorable public image and the manipulation of issues are both important components of campaign strategy, although, as exemplified by the emphasis on personality in the 1976 campaign, these two components are not always equally balanced.

The candidate structures his persuasive message and then attempts to manipulate the media to convey this message, untarnished, to the voters. The media, however, are more than passive channels of communication; they impose their own interpretations and news values on the candidate's message.

It is, therefore, a modified message that the voter receives, but the candidate's original intent in initiating the message remains unchanged--to persuade voters. The question that remains, however, is just how persuasive is this mediated message.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER V

THE MEDIA'S MESSAGE AND THE VOTER

Any discussion of the candidate's message and the media's effects on that message is incomplete without also considering the impact of the candidate's message on the voter. Communicating with the voter is, after all, the ultimate goal of both media and candidate, although their motives and desired effects may differ.

While most critics and communications researchers would agree that the media have some effect, or impact, on the voter, few can reach agreement as to the exact nature or extent of that impact. Further complicating the problem is the fact that society is in constant flux, thereby rendering research findings of several decades ago inapplicable or outdated.

Research in the specific area of media effects on the voter during a presidential election is a relatively recent phenomenon. The first important study was Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's Erie County study in 1940, and only the most recent elections (1968, 1972, and 1976) have come under close, systematic scrutiny by various researchers to determine possible media effects.

That this is a relatively new area of research is not surprising. Concern for and interest in media effects on

the voter are directly related to the rise of the mass media campaign and the new politics, also a recent phenomenon. As the media began playing a more important role in the nominating and electing process, researchers began to wonder exactly how the media were affecting that process, particularly the voters.

There have been numerous studies since 1940, and this paper does not pretend to be an all-inclusive examination of them. Nevertheless, by reviewing several of the more important studies, it is possible to determine the main theories concerning media impact on the voter. Essentially, there are two basic theories--selective perception and agenda-setting.

The Impact of the Mediated Message:
Selective Perception versus Agenda-Setting

The first theory of media impact upon voters to be supported by scientific research is the selective perception theory as proposed by Lazarsfeld et alii following their examination of the 1940 presidential election. Long before this theory was formally postulated by Lazarsfeld, however, other perceptive observers of the media and society were suggesting that such a process was at work. One such observer was Walter Lippmann who explained in 1922 that the way people perceive a message is affected by their cultural stereotypes, resulting in a tendency to "define first and then see":

A report is the joint product of the knower and known, in which the role of the observer is always selective and usually creative. . . .

For the most part we do not first see, and then define, we define first and then see. In the great blooming, buzzing confusion of the outer world we pick out what our culture has already defined for us, and we tend to perceive that which we have picked out in the form stereotyped for us by our culture.¹

Lippmann is saying, in essence, that people often see only what they want to see, based upon their own preconceptions, and they redefine what they see to conform to their own personally held stereotypes. Edward Bernays, writing in 1923, takes Lippmann's idea a step further. Not only do internally held, cultural prejudices and stereotypes affect the way people perceive a message, but also external social influences result in people acting out of "gregarious instinct" rather than detached, objective judgment:

The workings of the gregarious instinct in many result frequently in conduct of the most remarkable complexity, but it is characterized by all of the qualities of instinctive action. Such conduct is usually rationalized, but this does not conceal its real character.

We may sincerely think that we vote the Republican ticket because we have thought out the issues of the political campaign and reached our decision in the cold-blooded exercise of judgment. The fact remains that it is just as likely that we voted the Republican ticket because we did so the year before or because the Republican platform contains a declaration of principle, no matter how vague, which awakens profound emotional response in us, or because our neighbor whom we do not like happens to be a Democrat.²

What Lippmann and Bernays have indicated is that a person is greatly affected in how he perceives a message and makes a decision by the workings of society--both through internally held, cultural stereotypes and through external contacts and influences. In short, cultural influences have

a greater impact in persuading people than do persuasive messages originating outside a person's immediate social environment. This would indicate that perhaps the media's effect on the voter is greatly limited by social constraints and personal biases and stereotypes.

Such was not the commonly held belief, however, in the 1920s and 1930s. During that period much was written about the persuasive impact of mass-mediated propaganda, and many critics and researchers felt the media's ability to persuade was significant. It was with this popular idea in mind that Lazarsfeld et alii began their study of the media's impact on the voters of Erie County, Pennsylvania, during the 1940 presidential election. It was the first study to use the research panel, and it was the first scientific attempt at analyzing the media's persuasive impact on the voter.

The results of the study were surprising to many who believed in the media's persuasive abilities, but certainly not to observers such as Walter Lippmann who already knew that people "define first and then see." Lazarsfeld found that people selectively attend to those messages which most closely parallel their "psychological predispositions":

But there is . . . an effect caused by the still-unconscious psychological predispositions of the voter himself. From his many past experiences shared with others in his economic, religious, and community groups, he has a readiness to attend to some things more than others. His internal as well as his external situation is weighed one way or the other. Voters somehow contrive to select out of the passing stream of stimuli those by which they are more inclined to be persuaded. So it is

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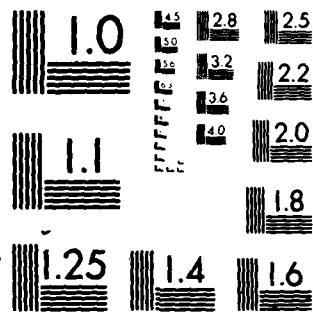
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that the more they read and listen, the more convinced they become of the rightness of their own position.³

In the specific area of campaign communications, much of which was mass-mediated, Lazarsfeld found that, because people attend selectively to those communications already in-tune with their political predispositions, few voters were persuaded to change their minds. Mass-media propaganda tended, instead, to merely "reinforce" the voters' existing beliefs:

The universe of campaign communications--political speeches, newspaper stories, newscasts, editorials, columns, magazine articles--was open to virtually everyone. But exposure was consistently partisan, and such exposures resulted in reinforcement.

By and large about two-thirds of the constant partisans . . . managed to see and hear more of their own side's propaganda than the opposition's.⁴

Hence, people's beliefs are not changed, or "converted," as Lazarsfeld called it.⁵ Rather they are strengthened, or "reinforced." As Lazarsfeld notes, this reinforcement is an important part of the campaign process, even if it does not result in converting voters from one political camp to another:

Most people want--and need--to be told that they are right and to know that other people agree with them. Thus, the parties could forego their propagandizing only at considerable risk, and never on a unilateral basis. So far as numbers of voters are concerned, campaign propaganda results not so much in gaining new adherents as in preventing the loss of voters already favorably inclined.⁶

Hence, while mass-mediated campaign propaganda reinforces voters already leaning toward a particular candidate, few are persuaded to vote for a particular candidate because of mass-mediated propaganda. Lazarsfeld found that,

for those few voters who were persuaded to change their minds, the cause for their conversion was due not to the media but to the influence of "opinion leaders" within the community. As Lazarsfeld explains, personal contact with such community opinion leaders was more important, and believable, than the media:

More people put reliance upon their personal contacts to help them pick out the arguments which are relevant for their own good in political affairs than they do in the more remote and impersonal newspaper and radio. . . . Perhaps these sources see the problem from a viewpoint entirely different from his [the voter's] own. But he can trust the judgment and evaluation of the respected people among his associates.⁷

As a result of the Erie County study, the theory of selective attention, or perception, gained wide acceptance. The media's perceived impact on the voter changed from that of a powerful persuader to a mere reinforcer of already held beliefs.

Selective perception remains a key theory of communications research. Patterson and McClure cited the workings of selective perception as the main reason for the failure of television image campaigns in the 1972 presidential elections to persuade voters (this was also discussed in Chapter IV in connection with the image component of the candidate's message):

Most Americans have political biases. Most are loyalists in one way or another, whether their loyalty involves partisanship, group factions, or preferred public policies. Not being political eunuchs, they see candidates through their political desires. The candidate who shares their biases gains stature. His image improves. The candidate who opposes the biases loses stature, and his image deteriorates.

Any person who has been in a room filled with die-hard Republicans and Democrats, watching television while a President justifies his actions on a controversial partisan policy, knows firsthand the impact of selective perception.⁸

Many campaign consultants believe, as do many researchers, in the working of selective perception and, as Dan Nimmo notes, they try to overcome this barrier when constructing their persuasive messages:

Furthermore, persuasion specialists recognize that a person's attention is selective; selective attention means that we only pay attention to messages that interest us, reinforce what we believe, and are the most agreeable of those competing for our awareness. The selective attention barrier must be manipulated to produce desired buying habits or votes.⁹

The theory of selective perception stood for some time as the only communications theory on the media's effect, or lack of effect, on the voters that was backed by substantive research findings. During the 1950s and early 1960s, it remained the primary theory on media effects. Researchers were lax during this period in conducting further research into media effects on voters because Lazarsfeld's theory indicated that no significant effects besides reinforcement were to be found.

Eventually, however, researchers did begin reexamining media effects on the voter. In the 1960s a new perspective toward the media's impact emerged: While the media could not persuade, perhaps they did affect people's awareness and perception of issues? Specifically in the area of campaigning, perhaps the media play an important role in determining what campaign issues the voters will think about, and what importance they will attach to those issues? This became

known as the agenda-setting theory--the issues the public will think about and how much importance they will place upon those issues is based upon the emphasis given those issues by the media.

As with the selective perception theory, the agenda-setting theory was noted by astute observers long before Maxwell McCombs and Donald Shaw formalized it with their study of voters and media in Chapel Hill, North Carolina, during the 1968 presidential election.¹⁰ One such observer was Edward Bernays who cited a 19 April 1922 New York Tribune article to explain how a newspaper determines the "true value of persons and events" for its readers:

What you read on dull news days is what fixes your opinions of your country and of your compatriots. It is from the nonsensational news that you see the world and assess, rightly or wrongly, the true value of persons and events.

The relative importance your newspaper gives to an occurrence affects your thought, your character, and your children's thought and character. For few habits are as firmly established as the reading of the newspaper.¹¹

Indeed, taken to the extreme, what is on the media's agenda is "news," and what is not on the media's agenda will never see the light of day, no matter how significant, or newsworthy, the event might be. As Marshall McLuhan notes, "What went into the press was news. The rest was not news. 'He made the news' is a strangely ambiguous phrase, since to be in the newspaper is both to be news and to make news."¹²

McCombs and Shaw found that there is, indeed, a strong correlation between the media's agenda and the public's agenda, as evidenced by the direct connection between

how the media emphasized campaign issues in 1968 and how the voters emphasized those same issues:

They [the voters] apparently learn, furthermore, in direct proportion to the emphasis placed on the campaign issues by the mass media. . . .

Perhaps this hypothesized agenda-setting function of the mass media is most succinctly stated by [Bernard C.] Cohen, who noted that the press "may not be successful much of the time in telling people what to think, but it is stunningly successful in telling its readers what to think about." While the mass media may have little influence on the direction or intensity of attitudes, it is hypothesized that the mass media set the agenda for each political campaign, influencing the salience of attitudes toward the political issues.¹³

McCombs and Shaw divided the campaign issues presented in the local and national media available in the Chapel Hill area into major and minor campaign issues.¹⁴ They found that the correlation between the major issues carried by the media and the voters' judgments of what they felt were the major issues was +.967. A similar strong correlation was found for the minor issues (+.979).¹⁵ Hence, the media determined what issues the voters of Chapel Hill thought about, as well as how important they felt those issues were.

McCombs and Shaw took their study one important step further, however. They examined their findings to determine if selective perception was at work, or if agenda-setting was the key media effect:

If one expected voters to pay more attention to the major and minor issues oriented to their own party--that is, to read or view selectively--the correlations between the voters and news/opinion about their own party should be strongest. This would be evidence of selective perception. If, on the other hand, the voters attend reasonably well to all the news, regardless of which candidate

or party issue is stressed, the correlations between the voter and total media content would be strongest. This would be evidence of the agenda-setting function. The crucial question is which set of correlations is stronger. . . .

Considering both major and minor item coverage, 18 of 24 possible comparisons show voters more in agreement with all the news rather than with news only about their party/candidate preference. This finding is better explained by the agenda-setting function of the mass media than by selective perception.¹⁶

Hence, McCombs and Shaw discount the workings of selective perception as first formalized by Lazarsfeld et alii in 1940. This apparent discounting of selective perception is perhaps best explained by the changed nature of campaigning from 1940 to 1968. As noted earlier, Lazarsfeld found that personal contacts between community opinion leaders and other voters were the primary cause for voter persuasion, and not the mass media. Lazarsfeld did find, however, that mass-mediated propaganda did influence opinion leaders, who in turn influenced other voters. Hence, a two-step flow in communications occurred:

But they [opinion leaders] reported that the formal media were more effective as sources of influence than personal relationships. This suggests that ideas often flow from radio and print to the opinion leaders and from them to the less active sections of the population.¹⁷

Hence, in 1940 it was the opinion leaders of the community, not the mass media, who were setting the public agenda for their fellow citizens. Furthermore, such opinion leaders were inevitably the prominent citizens of the community and as such, they tended to be involved voters with strong perceptions as to which party or candidate to support. This means they attended to the messages of their preferred

party and urged their friends in the community, who were also usually of the same party, to similarly attend to those messages. Hence it is not surprising that in 1940 Lazarsfeld found that voters, most of whom at that point in history were still strongly partisan, attended more to the messages of their preferred candidate and party.

By 1968, however, this was no longer the case. As McCombs and Shaw discovered, people attended to all campaign messages, not just messages concerning their party. There are perhaps two important reasons for this change. First, the two-step flow theory is no longer in effect because of the advent of new politics with direct (one-step) contact with the voter. Second, the decline in partisanship has resulted in voters placing less reliance on strongly partisan opinion leaders in making voting decisions.

Michael Robinson explains how television has made the two-step flow theory "obsolete":

At a minimum, this new system [of televised campaigning] has rendered obsolete the old theory of a "two-step flow" of communications. . . . The television news system circumvented both party and opinion leaders, and in the process not only rendered the electorate less committed to partisan identification but also left it considerably more sensitive to images and issues.¹⁸

Hence, voters today do not receive the majority of their campaign information from partisan opinion leaders but from the relatively objective media. The modern voter also puts more importance into the information received directly from the mass media, unlike the 1940 voters who relied more on personal contacts. Thomas Patterson describes this new importance of media information, explaining that declining

partisanship is the main cause:

. . . the media have gained importance because the voters have come to depend more heavily on the information they provide. One of the most dramatic political changes in recent times has been the erosion of the voters' partisan loyalties. From the earliest Gallup polls in the mid-1930s until the early 1960s, surveys indicated that 80 percent or more of the adult public identified with either the Republican or Democratic party. About half of these described themselves as strong partisans. Presently, however, party identifiers account for only about 60 percent of Americans, most of whom say they are weak partisans. . . .

Today, . . . because of the weakening of partisanship, the vote is less predictable and more volatile. It also is more sensitive to short-term influences, such as an election's issues and personalities, which are transmitted largely by the media. Voters' evaluations of the candidates are now based more heavily on what they learn through the media during the campaign.¹⁹

Thus, in 1940, voters were more partisan, and were influenced heavily by personal contacts with even more-partisan opinion leaders. It is no wonder, therefore, that attention to the media was selective. By 1968, however, voters were less partisan and perhaps were seeking campaign information about both candidates. Also, this information was coming directly to them via the relatively objective channels (news channels, at any rate) of the mass media. It is not surprising, therefore, that McCombs and Shaw found voters attending to campaign issues in the media on a non-partisan basis.

Political scientist Robert Lane refers to this development as "Rootless Politics." He notes that voters were once motivated based on party, class, and community cues, and the media were not an important factor. But now

the rootless voter must rely on "the media and other external cuing devices" for information and guidance.²⁰

Because of a changing society, it seems probable that agenda-setting has replaced selective perception as a more accurate theory for describing the media's impact on the voter, and certainly the agenda-setting theory enjoys wide acceptance today. But perhaps the most accurate picture is gained if both theories are considered together, as Patterson does in his study of the 1976 presidential campaign.

As noted earlier, Patterson and McClure cited selective perception as the main reason for the limited ability of televised messages to persuade voters in the 1972 campaign. Their 1972 study, however, concerned primarily television news and advertising and was limited to the general election period. In the 1976 study both print and broadcast media were studied, and the primary as well as the general election period was examined.²¹ The findings were far more comprehensive and took into account not only selective perception but also agenda-setting. Patterson takes note of the two potentially conflicting theories:

Do voters selectively perceive nearly all of the election messages they receive through the media? Or do most messages reach voters largely unfiltered by their preference for one candidate over another?²²

Patterson's answer? Both. As a general rule, voters follow the media agenda uncritically and, unlike Lazarsfeld's findings, there is no psychological need for selective, reinforcing information. However, voters do engage in selective perception when the information presented is so different in

viewpoint from the voter's beliefs that his "defenses" are "activated":

. . . voters have slight preferences for some types of news, but it is based as much on their interests as a psychological need for reinforcing information. While voters do engage in selective perception, it is inconstant and depends considerably on whether people encounter the type of information that is most likely to activate their defenses. In general, voters who differ in their political commitments and interest are considerably more alike than different in the types of news messages they consume and in their immediate response to most messages.²³

Patterson notes that all voters, regardless of partisanship or candidate preference, receive most campaign information with an open mind because "most election news does not provoke a response to the candidates' abilities or actions."²⁴ In short, it deals primarily with the horserace rather than candidate qualifications or controversial issues.

On the other hand, when a news item did contain significant information about a candidate's ability or posture, the voter reacted to the news based upon his candidate preferences: "Three in every four reactions toward the postures and abilities of one's favorite candidate were favorable; four in every five reactions of this type toward opposing candidates were unfavorable."²⁵ Patterson found this to be true regardless of which news medium presented the story.

In summary, it is possible that, in the modern presidential election, voters seek and receive a full gamut of information from the media in a fairly unfiltered manner. Hence, the media are agenda-setters because in large measure

they tell the voters what campaign issues to think about. Unlike the voters of the 1940s, the voter of the 1980s does not selectively expose himself to information biased in favor of his preferred candidate. The modern voter does, however, selectively perceive some incoming messages as favorable to his candidate or unfavorable to his candidate's opponent.

An important corollary to both the selective perception theory and the agenda-setting theory is that of activation. As Lazarsfeld explains, the increasing emphasis on the campaign in the news arouses the interest of the voters:

As the campaign gains momentum, people who have not been interested begin to pay attention. At this stage it is the rising volume of propaganda which initiates the change. . . . As people "wake up" to the campaign, their aroused attention leads them to see and hear more of the supply around them. The voter's initiative is more in evidence at this stage; but the relationship is circular. Increased attention brings increased exposure which further arouses interest and attention and adds to exposure and so on.²⁶

But while increased coverage of the campaign aroused the voters' interests, Lazarsfeld found that not all voters were aroused to the same degree. Lazarsfeld noted, for example, that in the two weeks just before the election, the voters are bombarded with a veritable propaganda blitz. Yet, he discovered that many voters chose to ignore this mass of available information:

At the peak of the campaign, in late October, about half the population ignored stories on the front page of the newspaper or political speeches by the candidates themselves, and about 75% of the

people ignored magazine stories about the election. In short, the flood of political material at that time, far from drowning any of these people, did not even get their feet wet.²⁷

Hence, based on Lazarsfeld's findings, the "uninvolved voter" is discovered--the person who, if he votes at all, does not do so based on any significant knowledge of, or interest in, the candidates. This is one "tradition" that has unfortunately continued until today. Patterson, in his inspection of the 1976 campaign, found a "cyclical process" of voter activation that is very similar to Lazarsfeld's "circular" process. Patterson also found that about one-third of the electorate were unaffected by this activation process:

Interest and exposure are part of a cyclical process: heavier news exposure encourages higher interest, which leads to heavier exposure, which leads to higher interest. Of these two effects, that of news exposure is the most powerful. In terms of the total electorate, however, the campaign does not result in a continuously upward spiral of interest: the process eventually encounters resistance from people's marginal concern for politics. Not all voters have the potential to join the ranks of the strongly interested. . . . That peak interest was defined by the involvement of only a third of the electorate is evidence less of the scope of the modern campaign than of the secondary importance of politics to most people. However ambitious the campaign and however invasive the news, politics can reap interest only where its seeds have been sown.²⁸

Those voters most "activated" by the media were, as might be expected, also the most partisan and committed voters: "Those citizens who developed high interest in 1976 were, by and large, citizens who were at least somewhat committed to politics in the first place. Few citizens who were political neutrals took a strong interest in the campaign."²⁹

As might be imagined, this presents a dilemma for the campaign consultant: The uncommitted, or neutral, voter is exactly the one who is still open to persuasion, yet is also the most difficult to reach because he pays the least attention to mass-media political messages. Dan Nimmo explains how the professional campaigners nevertheless attempt to reach the uninvolved voter using entertaining, repetitious messages:

His [the uninvolved voter's] relevant attitudes are usually poorly articulated, of low intensity, and unstable. He probably does not identify with a party and attends to the campaign media for the gratifications it provides as entertainment rather than for information. . . . Whereas the involved voter evidences concerned political activity, the uninvolved voter is politically inanimate, and sometimes only a spectator at the contest. His relatively low involvement makes him the primary target of professional campaigners. They bombard his weak perceptual defenses, attempting to effect modest shifts in perception, to reinforce those shifts by repetition of gratifying entertainment, and to activate sympathetic perceptions by providing a credible voting choice.³⁰

As Nimmo explains further, the preferred medium for attempting to reach these uninvolved voters is television:

The mass media campaign is not directed to the informed voter but to the eyes and the ears of the voter who does not care very much. This voter is a member of a vast audience built primarily by commercial television and radio for purposes of marketing products. . . . Within it are large numbers of persons who usually isolate themselves from all other media--citizens of low to moderate income, with high school educations, little interest in politics, more experience in evaluating television, film and recording personalities than in deciding ambiguous public issues.³¹

The campaign's ability to reach the uninvolved voter even via the medium of television is limited, however. If Patterson and McClure's studies are at all accurate, few voters are influenced by persuasive television ads (see

Chapter II). Reaching the uninvolved voter via entertaining media events shown on the evening news is certainly another possibility, but as Patterson notes, the uninvolved voter, even one who is a habitual television viewer, does not watch the nightly news:

Habitual television viewing is not, however, a sufficient cause of heavy news exposure. For the fact is unless heavy viewers are also interested in politics, they do not pay much attention to the newscasts. Two in every three people who were chronic viewers and had high interest in politics watched the evening news regularly. But only one in six people who were chronic viewers and had low interest in politics watched the nightly news consistently.³²

And so, the uninvolved voter, who forms a large segment of the population if Lazarsfeld's and Patterson's studies are accurate, is the least likely to be activated by the media and the most difficult voter to reach with a persuasive message, even though he may be the voter most susceptible to the message.

A step beyond the uninvolved voter is the alienated voter, and there is some concern that this type of voter is on the increase because of the nature of the new politics. Political scientist James David Barber cites a Harris poll as evidence of increasing alienation:

Nowadays the public is pictured as bored and alienated--58 percent "alienated" in 1977, according to the Harris poll. Back in 1966, 37 percent said "yes" when asked whether or not they felt that "what you think doesn't count much anymore." By 1973 that feeling was with 61 percent. The angry alienated were far outweighed by the passive alienated, the shruggers and turners-away.³³

Another often-cited statistic to show increased voter alienation is the steady decline in the percentage of

eligible citizens who go to the polls. Jonathan Moore cites this downward trend in voting, noting that 54 percent of those eligible voted in 1976, compared to 55.4 percent in 1972, 61 percent in 1968, and 63 percent in 1960.³⁴

One of the reasons commonly espoused for this increasing alienation is that people are bored and disenchanted by the increasingly long process of the campaign. Jules Witcover explains this alienation process:

The voters are bored, soured, outraged, numbed, disaffected by the long procession of public statements, charges and countercharges, newspaper photographs and television film of seemingly nonstop campaigners at endless factory gates on frigid mornings. They wish it would all go away, at least for a while. But it does not go away That is how the seizing of power is attempted in the United States, and it is done in close quarters; lofty purpose, private fortunes and personal dreams all are bumped and jostled in the process, and as often as not, bruised or even crippled. So it is not surprising that the national consciousness and the national interest are also bruised and even crippled en route, until a great disenchantment approaching bitterness blankets the public attitude toward the whole primary business.³⁵

If Witcover is correct, not only is a large segment of uninvolved voters not activated by campaign news, but also an increasing number of alienated voters are activated in a negative way by the increasing flood of campaign news. They are bored and even embittered as a result of the process.

A final point concerning activation is made by Patterson who notes that those involved voters who are inclined to be activated by campaign news are being activated at an increasingly earlier point in the campaign:

That the news cannot reverse people's fundamental dispositions does not indicate that it is ineffectual. For while the campaign and its news have never been

able to create interest, they can activate interest. The significant fact about today's election coverage is that it can activate interest at a point very early in the campaign, helping to mobilize interest months before the voters make their final decisions at the polls. The news media, and television particularly, welcome the primaries with such extensive regular and special coverage that a large part of the potentially interested develop an early interest.³⁶

In summary, activation remains an accepted concept in the format first described by Lazarsfeld in 1940. Not all people are activated to the same degree, however, and some may be negatively activated, or alienated.

Lazarsfeld's concept of selective perception, on the other hand, does not enjoy the same acceptance today that it had in the 1940s and 1950s. The notion that people need the psychological reinforcement of campaign news favorable to their candidate or party is now discounted by many researchers, as is the idea that voters only expose themselves to news that is favorable to their point of view. But selective perception may still be at work when people's perceptual defenses are sufficiently aroused by a news or advertising item, thus causing them to perceive the item in terms favorable to their candidate.

The theory gaining increasing attention among researchers is agenda-setting. People attend to all the campaign news (if they attend at all) without selectively exposing themselves to only the items favorable to their candidate. While this does not usually result in conversion, or persuasion, it does result in voters thinking about those campaign issues most emphasized by the media. Hence, the

voters' agenda is set by the media's agenda.

With the fairly widespread acceptance of the agenda-setting theory came the question of which media are the more important agenda-setters. This question has been much debated recently, and certainly the professional campaigner as well as the researcher is interested in the answer.

The Primary Agenda-Setter: Print or Broadcast?

The question of the media's ability, or power, to set the public agenda usually centers around the influence of broadcast versus print media. Many critics, such as Frank Mankiewicz, contend that television is the nation's premier agenda-setter:

Events may take place--important events by any standard--and if there is no camera and correspondent present to record it, it is not "news" and at least 50 per cent of our countrymen will never learn of it.

The impact on American politics--in the larger sense, including social movements, national priorities, elections and legislation--has been incalculable. Television literally sets our national agenda; it determines what Americans will be talking about and the choices we will have about how we will live. Even more important, it determines what we will not be talking about, and the choices we will not have.³⁷

Various reasons for television's agenda-setting power are posited. Michael Robinson believes that television's audio-visual qualities make it more memorable and credible as an agenda-setter:

. . . television has an audio-visual quality the other media lack. Most of the research in this field indicates that this obvious and unique quality makes the content of television more memorable and evocative, if not necessarily more persuasive. And seeing journalists, as opposed to reading them, makes anchormen and correspondents both more familiar and more credible. Walter Cronkite is more likely believed because

he is seen than seen because he is believed.³⁸

Numerous polls are available to support this contention that television is a memorable, believable medium. Mankiewicz takes note of several of these polls. One poll shows that, from 1959 to 1974, the percentage of Americans who rated television's performance as "good" or "excellent" rose from 59 to 71 percent. Furthermore, by 1974, television was in the lead as "the most believable" medium by a margin of 51 to 20 percent over newspapers.³⁹

Advocates of television's agenda-setting power also like to point out that, not only is television the most credible medium, but also it is the most widely used news medium. Robinson discusses how television has increasingly become the primary, if not the only, news source for voters during the campaign:

By 1968 television journalism had become not just the primary source of campaign news, but to ever increasing degrees, the only source of campaign news, as older viewers came to regard television news as "enough" and younger viewers matured under a system in which Cronkite, Brinkley, Chancellor, and Reasoner were journalism. Quite remarkably, between 1964 and 1972 the percentage of people relying solely on television for information about national campaigns doubled. By 1972 television had unquestionably become the electoral connection.⁴⁰

While the believers in television's agenda-setting power pose convincing arguments and can cite impressive statistics to support their position, an equally convincing group of researchers, critics, and journalists believe that print, not television, sets the voters' agenda. At best, they say, television only follows print's lead in setting the agenda, and at worst, television may be inconsequential

as an agenda-setter. As print reporter James Perry notes, "Walter Cronkite plays by our rules":

In the beginning there are only a handful of us. We are the reporters based almost exclusively in Washington who write about politics all the time, year in and year out. . . . We are writers; we work in print. The point is important, perhaps surprising. This, McLuhan tells us, is an electronic age, but we are old-fashioned, linear reporters with pencils in our pockets. Every four years, we meet in New Hampshire when the White Mountains are still red and gold. We are the first to arrive and what we say, think, and write sets the tone and the theme for everything that follows. Walter Cronkite plays by our rules and Roger Mudd accepts our wisdom.⁴¹

Columnist Lee Winfrey agrees with Perry: "Notable in TV coverage of the campaign was that TV arrived first with almost none of the news that dominated election discussion. More often, the things that people talked about most appeared first in print."⁴²

While some critics such as Perry and Winfrey believe that television takes its cues from print reporters in setting the voters' agenda, other critics take the argument a step further: Television is ineffective at agenda-setting, regardless of who they cue off. Patterson and McClure found in their study of the 1972 campaign that regular television viewers, unlike regular newspaper readers, learned nothing from television news (hence, no agenda was set):

Some voters were neither regular television news viewers, nor regular newspaper readers; this group showed a 19 percent gain in information anyway. Their gain was as much as that of people who watched television news regularly without paying much attention to newspapers. In other words, people who depended on network news did not come to know more than people who ignored all the news media. If they depended entirely on the newspaper, however, they learned substantially more.⁴³

Patterson and McClure found that regular newspaper readers had a 35 percent increase in issue awareness, compared to the 19 percent increase for regular television news viewers as cited above.⁴⁴

Patterson's 1976 study examined the question of television versus print agenda-setting in greater detail. Patterson retreated somewhat from his earlier stand as a result of his 1976 findings. He discovered that television news viewing did result in some agenda-setting; however, print was still by far the more important agenda-setter. This was true both in the area of candidate recognition and issue awareness.

In the area of candidate recognition, Patterson found:

For each of the 1976 presidential candidates, recognition was higher at the end of the primaries among people who followed the newspaper regularly than among those who watched the evening news regularly. . . . This is not to say that television viewing was without impact. For 36 percent of the candidates among Erie respondents and 18 percent among Los Angeles respondents [the two cities used in Patterson's study], there was a significant relationship between heavier viewing and increased awareness. But heavier newspaper reading had a much more substantial impact on people's awareness--73 percent of the Erie relationships and 91 percent of the Los Angeles ones were significant.⁴⁵

Hence, newspapers were far more important than television in setting the voters' agenda concerning candidate recognition. The newspapers were also more important in setting the voters' issue agenda:

The public's increased issue awareness during a presidential campaign usually is credited to information received from television and the newspaper.

Yet while the newspaper makes a substantial contribution, television actually does not add significantly to what people learn [a finding similar to the 1972 study]. . . . For more than 90 percent of the issue positions studied, no significant relationship was found between heavier viewing and increased issue awareness Such a relationship did appear among newspaper readers. . . . On 60 percent of all issues . . . they [heavy readers] learned significantly more . . . from one interview to the next.⁴⁶

Another example from Patterson's 1976 study showing the importance of the newspaper in setting the agenda is that of increased issue awareness specifically during the primary period. Patterson found that regular newspaper readers showed an increased awareness of 75 percent of Carter's issue positions and 63 percent of Ford's. Frequent television news viewers, on the other hand, gained substantially higher awareness than did infrequent viewers on only 13 percent of Carter's positions and none of Ford's.⁴⁷

Hence, while there are those who believe in television's agenda-setting power, there are perhaps just as many critics who refute it, at least in relation to presidential campaigning. Several reasons are often cited for television's lack of agenda-setting power. As Patterson and McClure note, one reason may be the inadequacy of the television news format in comparison to the newspapers':

Rather than providing in-depth reports, television news gives limited coverage to a large number of stories. This format makes television news little more than a headline service and guarantees that the content of television news will be severely restricted. . . .

Newspapers succeed where television news fails because newspapers can clearly demonstrate the significance they attach to a given story. Newspapers have at their disposal the traditional means of

indicating emphasis and significance--long stories, short stories; front page, back page; above the fold, below the fold. Thus the print medium gives readers a strong, lasting, visual indication of significance.⁴⁸

Another reason for television's limited agenda-setting power in the campaign process may be that much political information is not suited to television's visual format. As Patterson explains, political news is spoken and written news, not visual:

Although it might be thought that television's pictures would give it an edge as an agenda setter, they appear to weaken its effect. . . . Most political information must be communicated with the spoken and written word. Often significant developments occur outside the range of the camera; are produced by a talking head, as in a press conference or speech; or involve processes, patterns or trends. In such instances, which account for the large majority of political news stories, there are no dramatic pictures with which to convey the story and television must rely on the talking heads of newsmakers and its reporters. Or, as happens frequently on the evening newscasts, the essential message conveyed by the reporter's narratives is accompanied by pictures tangential to the message.⁴⁹

Thus, campaign news concerning issues and candidate qualifications lend themselves to print rather than television coverage.

The final, and perhaps most important, reason critics cite to explain television's lack of agenda-setting power in comparison to print is that television is not the public's main source of news. As was noted earlier in this section, advocates of television's agenda-setting power cited statistics showing that television is the main source, and often the only source, of news for many people. Not all researchers are in agreement with these statistics.

Patterson explains that the poll most often cited to show that television is the main news source is an annual survey by the Roper Organization that has been ongoing since 1959. In this survey people are asked where they get most of their news. In 1976 about 40 percent said television, 25 percent said the newspaper, and 25 percent said both.⁵⁰ A closer examination by Patterson revealed, however, that the newspaper, and not television, actually has the largest regular news audience:

A more precise assessment [than the Roper poll] of the political audience is obtained by asking people how often they see the news on television or in the newspaper. When this is done a much different picture emerges. It is actually the newspaper, not television, which has the larger regular news audience In Erie 48 percent of those polled said they regularly read a daily paper's news sections, while 34 percent said they regularly watched the evening newscasts of ABC, CBS, and NBC. In Los Angeles 33 percent claimed to be regular readers and 24 percent were regular viewers. Moreover, the frequency of use is higher among newspaper regulars. On the average, regular newspaper readers said they read their paper's news page six days a week, while regular viewers said they watched the evening news three or four times a week.⁵¹

Political scientist James David Barber cites two studies that tend to support Patterson's findings. The first study involved monitoring via cameras the television news-viewing habits of twenty Kansas City families for six days. The study found that, first of all, the families inflated their estimates of how much news viewing they did by forty to fifty percent. Secondly, the cameras revealed that, for almost half the time that the evening news shows were turned on, no one was in the room watching them.⁵²

The second study cited by Barber was a national survey

conducted by Robert L. Stevenson and Kathryn P. White. Their findings are similar to Patterson's: ". . . half of America does not watch the evening news, one in four watch it occasionally (one to four times in two weeks), one in fifty watch it every night (thirteen or more times), one in a hundred confess to every-night viewing at 'full attention.'"⁵³

In addition, not only may television not be the "primary" news source some polls, such as the Roper poll, indicate that it is, but it is also possible that viewers do not pay much attention to the television news they do watch. As Patterson and McClure discovered in 1972, news viewers have trouble recalling what it was they had recently seen on the news:

The viewing of network news is no different than watching televised advertising or prime-time whodunits. Indeed for many viewers, network news, because it contends with dinner hour clamor, may receive even less attention than other programming. In any case, many viewers have only a hazy memory of what they have seen on network news. Among people who claimed to have recently watched network news, only one in three were able to recall accurately a news story they had seen.⁵⁴

James Perry cites a study conducted by Andrew Stern of the University of California at Berkeley which produced similar results:

Of 232 respondents who were asked, "What do you recall from tonight's broadcast?" with an average of 19 items to point to, 51 percent could not recall a single story a few minutes after the newscast was off the air. Among the 49 percent who could summon up at least one item, the last thing they hear, the windup commentary by Eric Sevareid or Harry Reasoner, was least remembered.⁵⁵

Patterson's 1976 election study provides further

evidence of the viewers' tendency to forget. Patterson found that newspaper readers could better recall a news item than could television news viewers:

Newspaper coverage left a more lasting impression than did television news. While over 55 percent of the newspaper readers could accurately recall a news story seen within 24 hours, only about 45 percent of network news viewers could do so. This difference held regardless of people's background.⁵⁶

Hence, there is significant evidence that television may not be the powerful agenda-setting medium some believe it to be. Indeed, newspapers may be the key agenda-setter in the political campaign.

It is important to note, however, that the critics and studies cited so far have dealt primarily with the agenda-setting ability (or lack of ability) of television evening newscasts. It is a somewhat different story when the agenda-setting power of television specials is considered. Almost all the critics are in agreement that television's power to attract attention is unsurpassed by any other medium if the situation is right. As Patterson notes, while the newspaper ". . . had a steady and independent influence on voters' interest . . . , " the ". . . impact of television coverage was not matched by the newspaper at any point in the 1976 campaign."⁵⁷

Specifically, Patterson cites the power of television agenda-setting during live campaign events, such as the 1976 debates and conventions:

Television's influence, however, is not always reduced by the medium of pictures. Television communication is powerful when the subject is a live

event. In 1976, exposure to the televised debates and conventions had a clear impact on the public's agenda

Several important differences exist between television's live coverage and the daily news coverage. While viewers of an evening newscast catch a 90-second glimpse of the campaign, viewers of a convention or debate are exposed at length to the event, resulting in a strengthened impression that what they see is significant. Moreover, television's images of a debate or convention are direct--the pictures and the words flow together. . . . Finally, televised convention and debate coverage takes viewers directly to the scene; what they receive is not a stylized rendition of earlier developments, but a largely unfiltered and immediate view of the actual event.⁵⁸

As journalism professor Edwin Emery notes, television coverage of special events has, on occasion, played a decisive role in political campaigns. Emery cites several examples, including Nixon's famous "Checkers" speech of 1952 and the Kennedy-Nixon Great Debates of 1960 that proved so disastrous for Nixon.⁵⁹

As Patterson and McClure noted after the 1972 campaign: "When television news breaks into regular entertainment programming to report a greater than bulletin-length story, the salience of that issue or event to the viewer is sharply and uniquely affected."⁶⁰ The example they cite from 1972 is Nixon's trip to China, the coverage of which greatly aided Nixon's chances for reelection:

. . . network news coverage of President Nixon's trip to China is a good example of a story that satisfied the conditions necessary for television agenda-setting to occur. Coverage of the China trip was intense, often interrupting regular entertainment programming. The pictures were mysterious, exciting, and informative. . . . Almost universally our respondents--Republicans and Democrats, Nixon and McGovern voters--were persuaded of the event's significance. Months later, Sino-American

relations were still an important political issue to our respondents.⁶¹

In summary, television may not be the strong, steady, day-to-day agenda-setter that newspapers are, but it certainly has its moments. And as Robinson notes, it is impossible to dismiss as unimportant any medium as popular and pervasive as television, whatever the results of a particular study may show: ". . . the medium providing the major source of both news and entertainment must fundamentally influence the public, the government, and the relationship between them."⁶²

The Nature of the Agenda

Given the widespread acceptance of the agenda-setting theory, it remains to be seen what sort of agenda the media set for the voter. If the voters concern themselves primarily with the campaign issues deemed relevant by the mass media, then it is important to consider what those issues are and how much emphasis the media places on them. As might be imagined after reading the section in Chapter III concerning horserace coverage, the agenda set by the media is primarily one of campaign issues, hoopla and personality. McCombs and Shaw noted this in their seminal study on agenda-setting in the 1968 presidential campaign:

The over-all major item emphasis of the selected mass media on different topics and candidates during the campaign . . . indicate that a considerable amount of campaign news was not devoted to discussion of the major political issues but rather to analysis of the campaign itself. This may give pause to those who think of campaign news as being

primarily about the issues.⁶³

Doris Graber's analysis of print and broadcast media in the 1968 and 1972 presidential elections drew the same conclusion:

. . . media audiences received most information about general human qualities of candidates rather than about their professional qualifications. As for issues, the media stress the excitement of campaign skirmishes, instead of dwelling on the manifold problems facing the country and the merits of the solutions proposed or ignored by the candidates.⁶⁴

Patterson and McClure's 1972 study yields similar findings:

What is the agenda that evening newscasts set in the public's mind?

The answer is disturbing: The legacy of network reporting during a presidential campaign is a television audience obsessed with election nonsense. What the viewer watches--the campaign trivia the networks so prominently display--is precisely how the viewer describes and defines the election world he cannot see with his own eyes.⁶⁵

And last but certainly not least because of its extensive nature are the findings of Patterson's study of the 1976 election.⁶⁶ In both print and broadcast media, during both the primary and the general election period (though moreso in the primaries), the agenda set by the media is of the "game" or horserace:

The power of the press rests largely on its ability to select what will be covered and to decide the context in which these events will be placed. Through this influence and because the press is guided substantially by its values, conventions, and organizational imperatives, certain aspects of an election are magnified and others muted in news of the campaign. The press's version of election politics elevates competition over substance, outcomes over process, and the immediate over the enduring. While these favored aspects are not an insignificant part of the

election, focus on them represents an unquestionably limited perspective.⁶⁷

Patterson's surveys of voters, when compared to the game agenda set by the media, show the extent to which the media are setting a horserace agenda for the voters:

In every group of voters the game accounted for at least 66 percent of the news reports that were recalled Furthermore, variations in voters' recall of the news about the game correlated with variations in its emphasis in the news. During the primaries, when the game received its greatest coverage, 80 percent of the news stories recalled were about candidate appearances, winning and losing, strategy and tactics, and other game-related subjects. In the general election, when the press's emphasis on the game declined, only 60 percent of the recalled stories pertained to the game.⁶⁸

Thus, available research findings indicate that the main component of the media's campaign agenda is the horserace aspect, and this agenda is subsequently reflected in the way the voter views the election process.

There is an aspect of campaign agenda-setting that deserves special mention. The media, as noted in Chapter III, prefer clear-cut issues, while the candidates prefer diffuse issues. There is one type of clear-cut issue which is also a campaign horserace issue; consequently it is prized more than any other type of issue by the media, and it is inevitably at the top of the media's agenda. That favorite of all issues is the gaffe--the candidate "error in judgment," as Patterson calls it:

Some clear-cut issues that arise during a presidential campaign are more appropriately called campaign issues than policy issues. Campaign issues are ones that develop from campaign incidents, usually errors in judgment by the candidate. Examples from the 1976 campaign would include Ford's remark during the second presidential debate that

Eastern Europe was free from Soviet domination, and Carter's comment during the primaries about ethnic purity.

Campaign issues receive preferred treatment from the press. At least when they first break, their customary positions are in the headlines, in lead paragraphs, on the front page, and at the top of the television newscasts. For a week or more after they break, they remain major news items.⁶⁹

As sociologist Herbert Gans notes, the press is always on the lookout for the "unusual and dramatic incidents":

. . . since news must be novel, the news media could not continuously cover the candidates' endlessly repeated set speeches. Instead, journalists questioned the candidates [in 1976] when they were available, and looked for unusual and dramatic incidents, notably the mistakes candidates made as they raced back and forth across the United States.⁷⁰

It is small wonder, considering the media's preference for the gaffe, that the wise campaign manager sees a need for controlling the press' access to the candidate and staff. Every contact between the media and the candidate is potentially damaging.

Patterson explains why gaffes have such special appeal to the media. First of all, gaffes conform to traditional news values. They are dramatic, controversial, often colorful, and unexpected. Also, they frequently build upon themselves. The candidate's opponents usually exploit such gaffes, and the media will question, or badger, the candidate to further explain his gaffe. Hence, a gaffe can remain newsworthy for weeks.⁷¹

Political scientist F. Christopher Arterton adds another reason for the media's emphasis on gaffes--it permits

the press a measure of control over the agenda. Indeed, while the media prefer, and hence emphasize, the horserace aspects of the campaign, they are nevertheless only reporting on events that are essentially under the control of the candidate. The candidate is in control of his own schedule, and consequently he controls the campaign agenda in large measure. The media, by seizing upon the occasional gaffe, are exerting their independent role in the campaign process.⁷²

Campaign gaffes are inevitable, and many examples are available for examination. One of the most devastating gaffes of recent elections was President Ford's comment during the second presidential debate with Jimmy Carter on 7 October 1976 that ". . . there is no Soviet domination of Eastern Europe."⁷³ In a classic example of the press' agenda-setting power, that statement, as said in the context of the debate, was not perceived as a mistake by most of the voters watching the televised debate until the press (with Carter's help, to be sure) made it a mistake. Ford consultant Michael Raoul-Duval and Ford pollster Robert Teeter describe the impact of Ford's gaffe:

DUVAL: In general, people who saw the debate did not perceive the president's remark about Eastern Europe as a mistake; but in some measure, people perceived that the press had created the impression of a mistake. This perception, coupled with the Carter attack on the president, tended to bring people back to the president.

TEETER: In the polling we started in the last minute of the second debate, between 11:00 and 1:00

that night, the question of who did a better job in the debate came out Ford 44 percent, Carter 43. Between 9:00 in the morning and noon the next day, it was Ford 32, Carter 44. Between noon and 5:00 in the afternoon, it was Ford 21, Carter 43. Between 5:00 and midnight the day after, it was Ford 17, Carter 62.⁷⁴

Patterson provides further research evidence as a disinterested source that verifies the trend in public opinion noted above by Teeter:

. . . while respondents who were interviewed within 12 hours of the second debate felt that Ford had won, most of those interviewed later felt Carter had won. The passing of time required for the news to reach the public brought with it a virtual reversal of opinion. The change was clearly due to news exposure, for in their evaluation of the debate only 10 percent of the people interviewed early mentioned Ford's statement on Eastern Europe. On their own, voters failed to see in his remark the significance that the press would later attach to it. Yet over 60 percent of those interviewed later discussed his Eastern Europe statement, most indicating that they, like the press, saw it as a major error⁷⁵

Such is the power of the press to set an agenda independent of what the candidate would prefer, despite the considerable ability of the candidate to control his own campaign agenda. A second example of the media's insistence on setting the campaign agenda rather than letting the candidate have complete control is supplied by Edward Kennedy's 1980 campaign. Despite Kennedy's obvious desire to avoid past, unpleasant incidents, the media brought the Chappaquiddick incident back into the public agenda as soon as Kennedy indicated his desire to campaign. During a CBS interview, Kennedy was questioned by Roger Mudd concerning the events at the Dike Bridge ten years ago. The Washington

Star had a full Sunday section on Chappaquiddick, and the Washington Post carried a three-part series.⁷⁶

This was only the beginning, of course. Newsweek even conducted a Chappaquiddick poll showing an increase in the number of voters who felt Kennedy had acted improperly at Chappaquiddick (an increase from 48 to 55 percent).⁷⁷

TV Guide reporters John Weisman and Sally Bedell describe the media's interest, not in Kennedy's proposals, but in Chappaquiddick:

Week after week, televised reports about Sen. Edward Kennedy's Presidential bid revolves not around his strong stands on the economy or foreign policy, but around his marriage and Chappaquiddick. After watching Kennedy's campaign during the weeks before the Illinois primary, NBC's Chris Wallace finally tells viewers: "Kennedy is tired of these questions. He hits Jimmy Carter for 20-per-cent inflation and a balanced budget at the expense of the poor. Reporters keep asking him about his personal life."⁷⁸

Many critics see this media interest in a ten-year-old accident as morbid sensationalism, yet others feel it is a legitimate character issue. Edwin Diamond notes:

This time the purists are wrong. While there most certainly will be substantial issues facing the voters in 1980, the 'character issue' just as certainly deserves to be one of them. . . . As voters, we are entitled to know these personal traits of the candidates to know what kind of a person this is, what fires his spirit, what dampens it.⁷⁹

For right or wrong, and perhaps each case must be judged individually, the press will continue to emphasize in its agenda horserace events and clear-cut issues, and the most desirable "issues" of all are candidate gaffes and scandals. The media have considerable agenda-setting power

in their ability to bring such gaffes and scandals to the top of the public agenda and keep them there--for ten years, in the case of Chappaquiddick.

Theories concerning media effects on the voter have gone through a transition over the last several decades. Lazarsfeld's Erie County study in 1940 shattered earlier theories of a powerfully persuasive press. The press, said Lazarsfeld, does not persuade; opinion leaders persuade. The press merely reinforces existing voter beliefs. Then McCombs and Shaw changed the picture again with their 1968 study. Their findings suggested that the media do, indeed, play a powerful political role, if not as persuaders, then as agenda-setters. Finally other researchers, such as Patterson, indicate that the media are powerful agenda-setters, but not always. The voters still exercise selective perception when the message activates their perceptual defenses, resulting in an interpretation of the message favorable to the voter's preferred candidate.

The answer probably lies in some combination of these theories, and changes in society, such as those that have rendered opinion leaders and the two-step flow theory obsolete, insure that no theory will provide the ultimate explanation. Also, each voter is affected differently based upon his political predispositions (involved, uninvolved, or alienated, as the case may be). Clearly, however, the media do play an important role in affecting the way modern voters think about the candidate and the campaign.

In conclusion, a point worth considering, but about

which no research study has been conducted: How much do the media set the candidate's agenda? The candidate and his campaign carefully monitor the media and react to what they find, as discussed in Chapter II. Consequently, as Rick G. Stearns, McGovern's deputy campaign manager in 1972 notes, the media affect the candidate's agenda:

Another aspect that ought to be mentioned is the extent to which the press conditions campaign decisions. I would guess that we subscribed to eighty or ninety newspapers from around the country, and these were our main sources of information about what was happening. What the candidate said in Seattle or what he said in Portland was probably more determined by newspapers than any other single set of information that we were receiving, other than the advice of our local campaign managers.⁸⁰

Hence, the media affect the candidate and his actions as well as the voters and their actions. To this extent they are far more than communications "tools" for the passive transmission of the candidate's messages.

FOOTNOTES

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION--THE PRESIDENTIAL MARATHON

Any discussion of the specifics of press-candidate relations during presidential elections must be put into perspective. Whatever effects, good, bad, or indifferent, the specific relations discussed so far may have on the electoral process, it is important to remember that these effects are at work during an increasingly long campaign period.

The Year-round, Full-time Marathon

In presidential elections since the advent of the new politics, and certainly this would include the 1972, 1976 and ongoing 1980 election, the length of the campaign period and the amount of planning and preparation for the campaign have increased significantly. Indeed, as Jules Witcover notes of the 1976 campaign, running for president has become a full-time, year-round marathon:

It is convenient to talk about "the political season" as if it were like the baseball season--starting with early-spring training and a round of exhibition games, moving into the regular season, and culminating in a World Series. But in truth there is no political season; the struggle for the presidency never stops. On the November night in 1972 when Richard Nixon was re-elected, political forces already were in process that shaped the battle for the White House in 1976, and politicians were assessing them, adjusting their own demeanor to them, positioning themselves.¹

Indeed, the wise would-be presidential candidate is hard at work preparing for the next election literally as soon as the last one is over. Hence, before the actual primary period begins, there is a long period of activity often referred to as the "invisible primary."² During this period potential candidates plan strategy, organize in the primary states, increase their name recognition with the media and important politicians, conduct polls, form a professional staff, and in general assess their chances for success in the upcoming election. Because of the nature of new politics, with its need for considerable technical assistance and extensive organization, the wise candidate enters this "invisible primary" increasingly early.

One of the main reasons for the marathon and the fact that the invisible primary period starts almost immediately after the last election is that, since 1968, the nominating process has been democratized. That is, the process has been taken out of the hands of party politicians and put into the hands of the voters via the direct primary. One of the main results of this is to considerably lengthen the campaign period.

From 1916 through 1968, about 30 percent of the national convention delegates were selected in direct primaries. In 1972 over 50 percent were chosen in 23 primaries. In 1976 about 70 percent were selected in 30 primaries.³ Finally, in 1980, there were 37 primaries held in 34 states, Puerto Rico, and the District of Columbia (separate Republican and Democratic primaries were held in Puerto Rico).⁴

This sharp increase in the number of primaries has democratized the nomination process to the point where presidential candidates must take their messages directly to a large number of voters via the mass media. This takes considerable time, effort, and money (within the constraints of the Federal Election Campaign Act). Additionally, candidates find it increasingly difficult to avoid running in some of the primaries, as Richard A. Watson explains:

The crucial question for serious presidential contenders is not whether they should go into the primaries; instead, it is which particular ones they should enter. However, even those options are not as numerous as they once were. The trend in recent state primary laws--automatically entering people in the race if candidacies are generally advocated or recognized by the national media and making it difficult or impossible for them to withdraw--forces candidates into contests in such states. Moreover, candidates are expected to demonstrate their strength in various parts of the country.⁵

Hence, candidates find they must "run everywhere," as Jimmy Carter did in 1976, and all the major candidates did in 1980.

Not only does the sheer increase in the number of primaries result in an increasingly long campaign, but there are also an increasing number of special events, such as straw polls, often held even before the first primaries, that aggravate the problem. Edwin Diamond explains the attractiveness of such events to local and state officials:

. . . campaigns grow longer as ambitious and/or alert state party chairmen create caucuses, straw votes, delegate preferences and other events that demand the candidate's time, and the presence of the attendant courtiers of the press. . . . All this is, presumably, in the interests of public understanding, though a lot of local egos get massaged and even more out-of-town dollars get spread around the state.⁶

As discussed in Chapter III, the media cannot resist covering such early "hard news," even if the results are not particularly significant to the outcome of the nominating process. Also, the candidates often place more significance on such events than they deserve. David Keene, George Bush's campaign manager, supplies one example from the 1980 election (a Republican straw poll in Maine on 3 November 1979):

I don't think the media creates these things. Take this year for example: The early line and what everyone was saying, and I think what most reporters were saying about Maine, which became important to our [Bush's] campaign, was that it wasn't important, that it didn't mean anything. It only got the coverage it got because Senator Baker made a claim, made it a test, and loaded a bunch of reporters into an airplane and took them up there and made them sit there.⁷

Hence, state officials, the press, and the candidates all conspire at times to promote such "meaningless" events, thereby further increasing the length of the campaign. The 1980 election has produced more of these special events than any previous election. A sample would include the Florida Democratic caucus on 19 October 1979, the Ames, Iowa, Democratic straw poll on 3 November 1979, the Maine Republican straw poll on 3 November 1979, and the Florida Republican state convention straw vote on 17 November 1979 (and a similar Democratic straw vote on 18 November 1979).⁸ None of these events were in any way binding on delegate votes at the upcoming national conventions, yet they received considerable national attention.

Another reason for the lengthening of the campaign is changes in the Federal Election Campaign Act. The 1974

amendment to this act provides matching funds to candidates during the primary period. To be eligible for those funds, however, a candidate first must register his campaign committee with the Federal Election Commission and raise \$5,000 in each of twenty states in individual amounts of \$250 or less.⁹ Hence, as Jules Witcover notes, if a candidate is to have federal assistance available by the time of the first primary, he must start fund-raising early:

It was clearer and clearer [in 1975] that the days of waiting to declare until the start of a presidential election year were over. To qualify for federal matching money by raising funds from an increasingly disenchanted and politically apathetic public, one had to run early and long.¹⁰

With the need to raise funds, organize in the increasingly large number of primary states, and deal with a growing number of straw polls and caucuses, it is small wonder that, as Carl Leubsdorf notes of the 1976 election, the candidate who starts the earliest and works the hardest will generally win:

By mid-February 1975, no fewer than five Democrats had already entered the 1976 race, including the three who ultimately became the major contenders in the primaries--Carter, Senator Henry M. Jackson, and Representative Morris K. Udall.

They had learned that, in just about every contested fight for a major party nomination in recent years, the winner was a candidate who had started early, among them John F. Kennedy, Barry Goldwater, Richard M. Nixon, and George McGovern.¹¹

While getting an early start is certainly not a guarantee of victory, it will certainly give a candidate an edge on his opponents. Elizabeth Drew believes Jimmy Carter has such an edge in 1980:

By the spring of 1979, months before Kennedy is said to even have made up his mind, the Carter campaign had field organizations in Iowa, New Hampshire, and Florida. When the Draft Kennedy movement in Florida went to work to win a non-binding caucus vote in October, the Carter organization was ready. Carter won. This victory, in turn, hastened Kennedy's entry into the race--before he and his organization were ready.¹²

The wise candidate in today's presidential election knows that he must start preparing early, often immediately after the last election (particularly if he is an unknown with much ground to cover). Hence, the modern campaign has become a "marathon," not only because of the increasing length, but also because of the grueling nature of campaigning. As Jules Witcover notes, it is not a pleasant process:

In order to begin to understand what a White House aspirant puts into his reach for power, and what it takes out of him, it is necessary to accept that running for President is no one-year crash effort, but a way of life extending over a number of years. The exercise is no romantic odyssey, at the end of which the winner emerges bright and shining and ennobled by the experience. It is a grueling, debilitating, and often dehumanizing ordeal that exacts an extravagant price not only for winning but also for the mere running and losing. The individual candidate and his family and friends all pay the price in varying measure¹³

The modern presidential campaign is thus not only long, but hard, and as James David Barber notes, the campaign has become a "stress test" that only the most dedicated candidates can endure:

The campaign stress test is a relatively new challenge. . . . As late as Harry Truman's time, the candidate taking a train was considered a sacrificial novelty. In 1976 Ford may have been slightly swozzled when he declared he would go into all the primaries. What was very recently a stroll among the people has been turned into a frantic race, thanks to the zeal of the mechanistic

democratizers. An indicator of seriousness has been transformed into a test for fanaticism.¹⁴

The modern presidential campaign is, if nothing else, long, hard, and demanding on the candidate. Some critics feel this is a good thing because only a candidate who is serious about wanting the job will go through the ordeal. For example, Walter Mondale was exploring the possibilities of a presidential campaign in 1976, but decided against it. His reason: "I found that I did not have the overwhelming desire to be President which is essential for the kind of campaign that is required. . . . I don't think anyone should be President who is not willing to go through the fire" ¹⁵

Supporters of the current process also feel the "stress test" is a useful way of evaluating the candidate's toughness and ability to act under pressure. Many critics feel, however, that the qualities measured by the stress test have little to do with the qualities required of a good president, as Jonathan Moore explains:

The electorate does get a chance to see the toughness, judgment, and stamina of the candidates tested by the rigors of extended campaigning throughout the nation. But attributes required in the presidency include the serious reflection, strategic planning, and managerial acumen needed to grasp and anticipate the manifold problems of our society and to conduct policies to resolve them. These qualities are not tested by the frenetic, reactive, manipulative character of campaigns¹⁶

James David Barber agrees with Moore that the qualities measured in the campaign may not be the qualities important to a president, but he adds that no one has really tried to find out:

The White House is a stressful place. The campaign is a stressful race. And the latter tests for the former. The generalized assumption is that the stresses are analogous or at least equivalent. I think careful inquiry would reveal few direct, explicable [sic] similarities--but whatever the outcome of that research, it cannot be addressed reasonably until the supposed stresses are specified.¹⁷

Hence there is some concern that the grueling nature of the marathon does not even provide a useful measurement of presidential timber. A further criticism of the increasingly long campaign process is that it severely limits who can run. Not only do otherwise qualified people avoid the race because it is not worth the ordeal, but some of the most experienced politicians are also discouraged from becoming candidates because of the impossibility of simultaneously campaigning full time and holding down a political position. Jessica Tuchman, Morris Udall's issues and research director in 1976, explains this problem:

Possibly one of the big lessons of 1976 is going to be that two year campaigns are now obligatory. I think that is potentially very negative in that it may limit the nomination to those men and women who are single-minded enough to dedicate two and a half years of full-time work to this pursuit. It seems impossible for anybody with heavy congressional obligations or for a governor in office to undertake the kind of campaign necessary the year before the calendar year of the election.¹⁸

National Journal correspondent Richard Cohen agrees, noting that increasingly, the successful candidate is one with "no other job," as 1980 is bearing out:

Each [candidate in 1980] has found that extraordinary amounts of time and physical energy are consumed by the daily tasks of campaigning. Not surprisingly, successful presidential candidates are increasingly those who, like Richard M. Nixon in 1968, Jimmy Carter in 1976 and Ronald Reagan and George Bush in 1980, have no other job.¹⁹

Not only does being a senator or governor as well as campaigner create impossible demands on a candidate's time, but it also results in a candidate having a record which he must defend. Dom Bonafede's advice to potential presidential candidates explains the difficulty of running with a record:

Don't have a record that you have to defend. Again, I remind you to take a chapter from Carter and Reagan. They served as governor several years before becoming presidential candidates, sufficiently long ago that their gubernatorial careers were only dimly remembered but time enough for them to embellish their performance beyond recognition. Having a record means that reporters, not to mention the opposition, will be nosing around and discovering that maybe things weren't as great as your biographies and press releases indicate. Also, policy positions in a previous reincarnation practically compel you to stick with them or else be accused of being inconsistent or of subverting your principles for political gain.²⁰

And so, in the modern presidential marathon, the most successful candidate may not be the experienced politician from Capitol Hill or the governor's mansion, particularly if he has taken stands on controversial issues or has proposed controversial programs or bills. The best candidate is one who is out of office, with plenty of time to devote single-mindedly to the grueling task of campaigning for the presidency.

The increasingly long, demanding campaign certainly takes its toll on the candidates, and only the very strong and ambitious can cope with the stress. The campaign can be equally demanding, however, on the candidate's traveling press corps who must keep the same hectic pace as the candidate. The devastating effects that months on the campaign

trail can have on the journalists and their work is perhaps best described by Timothy Crouse:

If you stayed away from the campaign for any period of time and then came on again, the first thing that struck you was the shocking physical deterioration of the press corps. During the summer, [before the general election] the reporters had looked fairly healthy. Now their skin was pasty and greenish, they had ugly dark pouches under their glazed eyes, and their bodies had become bloated with the regimen of nonstop drinking and five or six starchy airplane meals every day. Toward the end, they begin to suffer from a fiendish combination of fatigue and anxiety. They had finally arrived at the last two weeks, when the public finally wanted to read about the campaign--front-page play every day!--and they were so tired that it nearly killed them to pound out a decent piece.²¹

Reporter James Perry, who has spent many hours on the campaign trail, agrees with Crouse's observation, noting that it is no surprise that reporters "often fail" under such conditions:

Riding in crowded buses and cluttered airplanes, working 18 hours a day, writing stories on portable typewriters balanced on our knees, tossing our copy on the run to Western Union messengers, shabby, tired, frequently disoriented about both time and place, poorly fed and rarely rested, cranky, crotchety, hungover, we try to make sense of the most complicated political system in the world.

That we often fail is no surprise; that we sometimes succeed is a miracle.²²

This ordeal for reporters seems to be getting even worse as the number of primaries and special election events continues to increase. Hence, not only are the candidates hitting the campaign trail earlier every election, but so also are the media. Broadcasting magazine notes that 1980 may well be the longest ordeal yet for the journalists:

. . . because they started chasing candidates

earlier than usual, some correspondents and producers talked of feeling "burned out" even before what in the past had been the first major electoral contest, the New Hampshire primary. "I've been covering Reagan with Jerry Bowen of the Los Angeles office since the first of January [1980]," said [CBS correspondent Bill] Plante, "I get the sense that it's been under way forever, and here it is-- New Hampshire."

Some of the press had been at it even longer. Coverage of [Edward] Kennedy, for instance, has been intense since his formal announcement of candidacy last Nov. 7 [1979].²³

Indeed, as the presidential race starts earlier and earlier each election, the media are making every effort to keep up with the candidates' grueling pace. If anything, the media are more than just keeping up--they are devoting more and more resources and news space to the campaign, over and above that needed just to accommodate the campaign's increasing length. Dom Bonafede notes of the 1980 coverage: ". . . there is more coverage of political news than ever before, and it is more comprehensive in scope and detail, almost to the point of saturation."²⁴

There are many examples to illustrate the extent to which the media have escalated campaign coverage. The example of the New Hampshire primary was discussed in an earlier chapter. The Iowa caucuses are another example. In the 1980 election many of the major newspapers, the wire services, and the news magazines had as many as five reporters in the state. CBS had 136 people, not including workers hired locally; ABC had almost 85; NBC had 60.²⁵

Needless to say, such increasingly extensive coverage of an increasingly long campaign is exorbitantly expensive. The leading newspapers and news magazines expect to spend

about a half-million dollars, excluding salaries, covering the 1980 campaign. Each television network expects to spend more than \$30 million on the campaign.²⁶ Federal legislation may limit candidate expenditures, but no such limit applies for the media.

Nor do television's revenues from advertising offset these exorbitant costs, as Elmer Lower explains:

The long, expensive presidential election coverage has always been a "loss leader" for the networks ever since television started covering the process in 1948. Sales departments work hard to produce as much revenue as possible, but it never covers the cost.

William Breen, vice president in charge of news division sales for the ABC Television Network, estimates that each of the three television networks will write between \$18 and \$20 million worth of advertising to be placed in their year-long political programs. As those are gross figure estimates, they do not approach covering the tab.²⁷

The network with the best audience ratings will, of course, reap indirect benefits over the next four years which will offset the loss.²⁸

In summary, both the candidates and the media are hitting the campaign trail earlier and earlier. Consequently, the amount of time and money which must be invested in the process is considerable. Furthermore, the process is extremely demanding on everyone involved--the candidate, his family, his staff, and his traveling press corps. The value of such a demanding process might be justified if it resulted in a better informed electorate on voting day. However, as Thomas Patterson's 1976 study indicates, the increased length of the campaign does not significantly increase voter knowledge:

Today's lengthier campaign does not make the added contribution that it might because very little actual learning occurs during the first four months [the primary period]. Issue material is but a rivulet in the news flow during the primaries, and what is there is almost completely diluted by information about the race.²⁹

Hence, there is some doubt that the increased length of the democratized presidential election process is doing anyone--candidates, media, or voters--any real service.

The Presidential Marathon:
Is There a Better Way?

As Jules Witcover noted after the 1976 presidential election, the candidates' charges and countercharges and the media's love for gaffes resulted in a campaign that was not only long, but also less than "uplifting":

It had not been what one could call an uplifting campaign for the highest elective office in the land. The political horizon had been cluttered with superficial matters: the valances in [FBI Director] Clarence Kelley's apartment built by FBI carpenters; artful dodging by both Ford and Carter on the abortion issue, in blatant courtship of the Catholic vote; reports of Ford's free golfing trips and Carter's hunting trips; Carter's dissembling on a tax-reform statement and Ford's dissembling on Carter's dissembling; disclosure that Carter lusted in his heart, and pious denunciation from presumably lustless Republicans; a sick racist joke from a cabinet member [Secretary of Agriculture Earl Butz] who was dismissed but called "good and decent" by his boss; an incredible boner from Ford denying Soviet domination in Eastern Europe. Herblock, The Washington Post's personally gentle but professionally surgical cartoonist, summed up the mess by depicting the two presidential candidates as boxers punching themselves in the jaw as the ringside announcer reported: "Ford is rocked by a left to the jaw--Carter takes a hard right to the mouth--both men are hurting" ³⁰

It would seem that perhaps there is a better way, and many critics of the present nominating system wish to

see it changed. The present democratized system is largely the result of changes in state primary laws and political party rules enacted since 1968.³¹ Hence, the present marathon system of primaries and special events is the result of recent reforms, yet many critics are already clamoring for new changes. Few are sure exactly what changes are needed, however, as Jonathan Moore notes:

We now have an electoral process that some professional politicians and analysts believe requires serious campaigns to begin two years or more before election day. This means spending almost a full year in nonstop campaigning; candidates end up exhausted, if not burned out; and almost half of the electorate are no-shows. This system can't be all good, but there is considerable question as to how to improve it, and skepticism³² about where reform heaped on reform will lead us.

One of the first targets for reformers is the media. Because the press plays such an important part in the election process, some critics feel that changes in journalistic practices will result in improvements in the electoral system. There is a wide variety of shortcomings in campaign reporting that critics note could stand improving.

One media practice that receives considerable criticism is the method by which news organizations assign reporters to follow individual candidates. This results in a busload of correspondents following the same candidate for months. While this has advantages, notably that the correspondents get to know their candidate and his positions very well, the practice also has numerous shortcomings. One shortcoming already noted is that the campaign reporters are exhausted by the rigors of months on the campaign trail. One

recommendation from the American Assembly after the 1976 campaign was that news organizations rotate reporters among the various campaigns ". . . to furnish a fresh perspective and to guard against reporters acquiring vested interest in 'their' candidate's success."³³

Another recommended change that would reduce fatigue and prevent a loss of objectivity is for news organizations to use more zone coverage and less candidate coverage. In zone coverage reporters are assigned to cover various primary states or regions rather than individual candidates. As Richard Watson explains, zone coverage avoids ". . . the possibility of media representatives' becoming co-opted by and uncritical of a candidate and would also broaden their perspective of the nomination campaign."³⁴

Another oft-cited shortcoming of campaign reporting is the tendency for reporters to practice pack journalism. Pack journalism results in the coverage of a particular candidate's campaign being uniformly the same. Crouse notes that under the existing circumstances of campaigning, pack journalism and the uniformity in reporting that it produces are virtually unavoidable:

There were still lazy men on the [reporters'] bus, and men with large families to feed or powerful ambitions to nurture, who feared losing their jobs and thus played it safe by sticking with the pack. And there were still editors whose suspicions of any unusual story made pack journalism look cozy and inviting to the reporters. Campaign journalism is, by definition, pack journalism; to follow a candidate, you must join a pack of other reporters; even the most independent journalist cannot completely escape the pressures of the pack.³⁵

While pack journalism is, as Crouse explains, unavoidable to a large degree, measures can be taken to lessen its effects. The measures already noted--rotation of reporters and zone coverage--would help alleviate the problem of conformity in the pack's coverage. Also, as Watson notes, ". . . local reporters and editors should have more confidence in their own interpretations of nomination contests in their states instead of parroting the views of national reporters and columnists."³⁶

Another recommendation often heard is that the media need to place greater emphasis on the past records of presidential and vice presidential candidates. Also, key campaign staff should be evaluated and their backgrounds explored.³⁷

An obvious shortcoming of media coverage that aggravates the marathon nature of the campaign is the media's tendency toward horserace coverage. Watson notes several means by which this tendency could be limited:

The media should also stop concentrating on the "horse race" aspect of presidential nominations and devote more effort to giving in-depth information on the issues of the campaign. Although the time limitations and the lack of serious political interest of most television viewers preclude that medium's performing that function very well, there is no reason why radio and print media cannot do so. The media should also do a better job of assigning specialists . . . to analyze the candidates' public policy proposals.³⁸

Not only should issues be given more emphasis, but also the American Assembly recommends, more reports are needed comparing the candidates' stands on issues, as distinguished from the much more common practice of describing

the issue stands of an individual candidate without providing comparisons.³⁹

One final recommendation by the American Assembly is that the media should pay more attention to timing its news reports so that the information will better serve the voters:

The tendency at present is for the media to devote space and time to close examination of candidate qualifications early in the nominating season--when, however, few voters are motivated to pay attention to these reports. Later, when increasing numbers are increasingly interested, the media, having already presented much of this information, subordinate it to more current and often less significant topics.⁴⁰

The validity of this criticism may be in some doubt, as Patterson's study of the 1976 campaign indicates that more substantive information was available to voters in the convention and general election period than in the primaries, when there was heavy emphasis on the horserace.⁴¹ Certainly, however, the timing or pacing of the news throughout the campaign period could be given closer consideration by the media.

There is certainly much validity in many of the charges leveled against the press for the way it covers the marathon, and the recommendations for improvements as noted above are certainly worth consideration. The media are aware of their shortcomings, and many news organizations have attempted to implement some of the recommendations made by their critics. For instance, the use of zone coverage, rotation of reporters, and specialists to examine substantive issues is evident in the 1980 campaign.⁴²

Despite the media's awareness of their own shortcomings and their attempts to correct them, however, they seem destined to repeat past mistakes. As former White House press secretary Ron Nessen explains, the media go through a campaign ritual every four years, one phase of which is "Remembering the Lessons of the Last Time." Yet despite the fact that they remember, the media make the same mistakes over again.⁴³ As Nessen notes, one of the main repeated mistakes is to continually overemphasize the early special events, thereby aggravating the "marathon" condition:

. . . alas, phase two [Remembering the Lessons of Last Time] gives way immediately to phase three, known as Schizophrenia.

In this stage, Presidential-election correspondents promise not to make the same mistakes while they are making the same mistakes again.

Thus, on the day after a handful of Democrats voted in Florida in October for half the delegates to the Nov. 17-19 [1979] nonbinding state Presidential-preference convention, The Washington Post [*sic*] told its readers, "The first thing to remember about yesterday is that nothing really happened." The second thing to remember is that the Post made that "nothing" its lead story, devoting 41 column inches the next day under the by-lines of such world-class writers as David S. Broder, Martin Schram and Myra MacPherson. Some "nothing." . . .

. . . while chiding itself for giving too much attention to the early and inconclusive contests of 1976, the press has moved the start of the 1980 campaign another three months earlier--to October 1979--by focusing on the Florida balloting and on a straw vote among guests at a Republican dinner in Ames, Iowa!⁴⁴

As discussed earlier, the media are not solely to blame for this tendency, despite what Nessen may indicate. The candidate and state officials also play a role in aggravating the marathon process. But certainly the media are

partly to blame, and despite the media's awareness of that fact, and despite attempts by some news organizations to implement some specific improvements, the media seem unable to make any large scale improvements in their coverage of the marathon.

Many critics, such as Nessen, place the blame for shortcomings in the present campaign process squarely on the backs of the media. It is the media's fault that the present marathon exists, and the media must correct the shortcoming. The media critic wise to the nature of news, however, knows that this is expecting too much from the press, as Patterson explains: "It is this chaotic electoral system that the press is expected by citizens and politicians alike to make intelligible. But the press has neither the means nor the incentive to correct the system's weaknesses."⁴⁵ Indeed, to expect the media to do more than implement some of the specific improvements already discussed is to be ignorant of the press' limited ability to shape basic democratic principles. The media, as Patterson says, has neither the "means nor the incentive" to make basic changes in the electoral system. Furthermore, contrary to what some critics may believe, the problems lie "deeper than the press":

For the most part the problem of today's campaign lies deeper than the press. As long as disorganization characterizes the structure of the campaign, it will characterize the news of the campaign. The press might recognize more fully how it exaggerates the system's weakness and try to limit some of its practices But the press is guided by its own values, conventions,

and organizational imperatives, and these are certain to dominate its news decisions.⁴⁶

Hence, the very nature of news and the structures of news organizations tend to reflect, and undoubtedly exaggerate, the marathon process, but the media are not the root cause, nor can they be expected to be the dominant factor in rectifying the situation. The media cannot create organization from what is essentially a chaotic process, as Patterson notes above and Walter Lippmann noted years ago:

The press . . . has come to be regarded as an organ of direct democracy, charged on a much wider scale, and from day to day, with the function often attributed to the initiative, referendum, and recall. The Court of Public Opinion, open day and night, is to lay down the law for everything all the time. It is not workable. And when you consider the nature of the news, it is not even thinkable. For the news . . . is precise in proportion⁴⁷ to the precision with which the event is recorded.

Thus, as Arterton notes, the wise critic who wishes to see a change in the present "marathon" nominating process should turn not to the media but to the rules establishing the basic system:

The dominance of perception over concrete political support is particularly marked during the pre-primary and early primary periods. The latitude of journalistic interpretation is also greatest at this time, when the indicators of growing or declining political support are at their poorest in predictive validity.

The result is a frequently noted overemphasis on the outcome of early primary and caucus states. If this media impact upon the nomination process is seen as undue, the solution lies not in searching for ways to reform campaign reporting, but in examining revisions to the political system which will diminish the importance of the early perceptual environment.⁴⁸

The solution to the marathon will not be found in changes to the media. The media cannot change the basic

system. Indeed, it was not the media who brought about the current system, but rather a combination of new state primary laws, party reforms, and changes to the Federal Election Campaign Act. The media, to be sure, aggravate the marathon tendency by their emphasis on the first "hard" news and the horserace. And the media should continue to make improvements in their techniques of campaign reporting, but changes in the media alone will prove insufficient to change the system.

Some critics are aware of this, and at the same time that they recommend improvements in the media's campaign coverage, they take stock of the need to change the rules of the electoral system if the marathon is to be brought to a halt. The American Assembly's proposal following the 1976 campaign is typical:

The number of dates upon which presidential primaries can be conducted should be substantially reduced, and the intervals between primary dates should be lengthened beyond the current, typical one-week lapse. The effect of limiting the number of primary dates would be, we think, to broaden the representativeness of early choices; the media would thus be pressed to extend their coverage beyond any one state and to present the public with a wider array of voter reactions and candidate performances. The complex reality of the early emerging situation would be accurately conveyed, in contrast to the present overly-simplistic concentration on a single state constituency.⁴⁹

If the media's coverage of the present marathon seems unbalanced, confusing, or inaccurate, then much of the blame lies with the structure of the system. The media play a contributing role. Only by changing the system itself, however, will a corresponding change in media coverage of that system

be affected. And indeed, many critics of the present electoral process are considering such a change.

FOOTNOTES

¹Jules Witcover, Marathon: The Pursuit of the Presidency 1972-1976 (New York: The Viking Press, 1977), p. x.

²Richard A. Watson, The Presidential Contest: With a Guide to the 1980 Race (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1980), pp. 22-23.

³Thomas E. Patterson, The Mass Media Election: How Americans Choose Their President (New York: Praeger Publishers, forthcoming), pp. 3-4.

⁴Compiled from Facts on File: Weekly News Digest With Cumulative Index, vol. 40 (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1980), pp. 130-423 passim.

⁵Watson, p. 27.

⁶Edwin Diamond, "Warhol Politics," Washington Journalism Review 2 (April 1980): 54.

⁷Ray White, ed., "Press on Press: The 1980 Campaign," Washington Journalism Review 2 (January/February 1980): 58.

⁸Compiled from Facts on File: Weekly News Digest With Cumulative Index, vol. 40 (New York: Facts on File, Inc., 1980), pp. 783, 866, 887.

⁹Watson, p. 67.

¹⁰Witcover, p. 149.

¹¹Carl P. Leubsdorf, "The Reporter and the Presidential Candidate," The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: Role of the Mass Media in American Politics 417 (September 1976): 3.

¹²Elizabeth Drew, "A Reporter at Large: 1980: The President," New Yorker, 14 April 1980, p. 121.

¹³Witcover, p. xi.

¹⁴James David Barber, "Characters in the Campaign: The Scientific Question," in Race for the Presidency: The Media and the Nominating Process, ed. James David Barber (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), pp. 159-60.

¹⁵Watson, p. 23.

¹⁶Jonathan Moore and Janet Fraser, eds., Campaign for President: The Managers Look at '76 (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Ballinger Publishing Company, 1977), pp. 7-8.

¹⁷Barber, p. 159.

¹⁸Moore and Fraser, p. 152.

¹⁹Richard E. Cohen, "As a Launching Pad for the Presidency, Congress Isn't What It Used to Be," National Journal 12 (8 March 1980): 400.

²⁰Dom Bonafede, "How to Run for President," National Journal 12 (21 June 1980): 1026.

²¹Timothy Crouse, The Boys on the Bus (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973), pp. 375-76.

²²James M. Perry, Us & Them: How the Press Covered the 1972 Election (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, Inc., 1973), p. 4.

²³"New Hampshire: A Movable Feast," Broadcasting 98 (3 March 1980): 62-63.

²⁴Dom Bonafede, "Covering the Presidential Election: Despite the Cost, the Press Is Ready," National Journal 12 (2 February 1980): 192.

²⁵*Ibid.*

²⁶*Ibid.*, p. 193.

²⁷Elmer W. Lower, "Network Political Coverage in '80: Candidates Aren't the Only Ones With Their Futures at Stake," Television/Radio Age 27 (25 February 1980): 110.

²⁸*Ibid.*

²⁹Patterson, pp. 168-69.

³⁰Witcover, p. 609.

³¹Watson, pp. 13-21.

³²Moore and Fraser, p. 7.

³³Final Report of the American Assembly on Presidential Nominations and the Media, by Clifford C. Nelson, President (Mt. Kisco, New York: The American Assembly, 1978), p. 6.

³⁴Watson, p. 103.

³⁵Crouse, p. 15.

³⁶Watson, p. 103.

³⁷Ibid., p. 104.

³⁸Ibid., p. 103.

³⁹Report of the American Assembly, p. 6.

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 7.

⁴¹Patterson, pp. 86, 168-69.

⁴²Specific examples of news organizations that adopted these techniques in the 1980 campaign are found in Dom Bonafede, "Catering to Political Reporters: A Must for Presidential Candidates," National Journal 12 (5 April 1980): 560-64; Dom Bonafede, "Covering the Presidential Elections: Despite the Cost, the Press Is Ready," National Journal 12 (2 February 1980): 192-97; and Elmer W. Lower, "Network Political Coverage in '80: Candidates Aren't the Only Ones With Their Futures at Stake," Television/Radio Age 27 (25 February 1980): 52-110 passim.

⁴³Ron Nessen, "The Same Old Mistakes," Newsweek, 5 November 1980, p. 29.

⁴⁴Ibid.

⁴⁵Patterson, p. 175.

⁴⁶Ibid., p. 176.

⁴⁷Walter Lippmann, Public Opinion (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 363.

⁴⁸F. Christopher Arterton, "Campaign Organizations Confront the Media-Political Environment," in Race for the Presidency: The Media and the Nominating Process, ed. James David Barber (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1978), p. 4..

⁴⁹Report of the American Assembly, p. 5.

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